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Sunday, August 30, 2009

## Fostering: Drive in the slow lane for dog/dog intros



Fa-Fa-Frida went full adoption this weekend. This is one of those adoptions that has us all smiling like bliss ninnies. She was one tough broad when she came into the Oakland Animal Services...Full of the devil when it came to other dogs. Of course we loved her. Loooved her.

It took some doing, but we finally worked out an agreement with Frida, "You stop spitting obscenities at other dogs and we'll do our best to find you a new home. " She thought that was a fine idea, so we spent the next several weeks begging up rides for her to Pit Ed class, helping her develop good self control during arousal work (ie, flirt pole work) and writing extensive notes after every shift at the shelter. Week by week, she got over her leash-funk and became a true ambassadog. Once her leash-manners were on-track, longtime BR dog handler Yvette Stahr brought up the idea of bringing her home for foster, maybe even foster-to-adopt. Us: "Hmm. Let's try it." **The thing was,** Yvette and her husband Steve had another dog-selective dog at home, so how they went about the intros would be beyond crucial to how this worked out.

It worked. They did such a text-book solid job of managing the intros that I asked Yvette to give us a play-by-play as part of our series on fostering. I hope this is helpful to others...

### Six Steps to Smooth Sailing

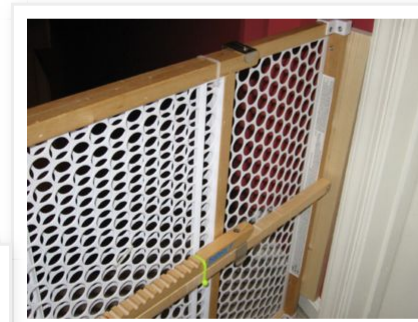
"Our mantra for the introduction was **"we can't go too slow,"** even though at times, it was hard not to rush things. However, since making this work was really important to both of us, we just kept reminding ourselves and each other that it takes longer to undo something done wrong than to do it right the first time.

Frida was on the NILIF program from the moment she walked in the door. (NILF = **Nothing in Life is Free** ) We wanted to make sure she understood that we were in control of her life now so she would look to us for leadership in any dicey situations. I really believe that this was a big key to our success.

#### First Step:

We started out with Frida crated in our home office away from our dog Nick, baby gate in the door. (NOTE: It's important to make sure neither dog is willing/able to scale the baby gate and do a non-kosher intro.)

The office is right off the kitchen/family room and in eyesight of the family room sofa so we could talk to her and praise Nick when he would look into the room calmly. It also gave Frida the opportunity to see that Nick was a valued part of the pack. We walked them together every morning but kept distance between them at all times to avoid any face-to-face issues. We would rotate who walked in front and also walked them side by side (but with one of us between them). Lots of praise for being calm and friendly. Anytime the dogs looked at each other with low slow tail wags, they got effusive praise.



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Keep'Em Home: Help & Resources





**Step 2:**

Frida in the office, out of the crate, but with the baby gate up. We monitored this VERY carefully and spent a lot of time at the doorway petting both dogs and telling them how good they were. We also treated each dog at the doorway (after putting them both in sits) and told them how good they were. During this time we ONLY gave treats when both dogs were present and being good. This is the step we spent the most time on. It was the easiest to control and the easiest to reward for correct behavior. The one snark we had at the gate was quelled quickly and loudly - both dogs were reprimanded and sent to time-outs behind closed doors alone. Everything else we did really built on the positive associations the dogs got during this time. We waited until we had reliable, consistent happy tail wags at the gate and no snarks before we moved on. We continued with the walks, allowing them to be closer, but still avoiding direct contact.

**Step 3:**

Frida on a tie-down but enclosed by an Xpen. This part actually went quite quickly for us due to the solid work done before. (Note: Frida learned to accept crate and tie-down confinement as part of her



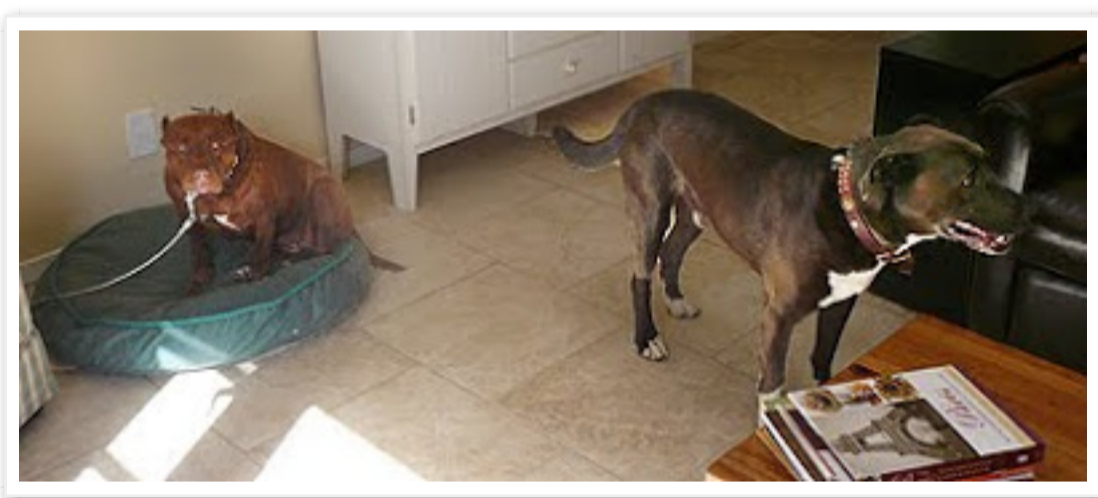
Ambassador training at Oakland Animal Services). Lots of praise and treats for good behavior and continued walks.

**Step 4:**

We moved on to Frida in the Xpen, but no tie-down. We took our time with this step since the next one would have them out together with no barrier and we wanted to make sure we had a solid base. We kept a very close eye on body language and quashed any posturing by either dog and praised appropriate behavior. Continued with the walks and allowed some contact (butt sniffing, but no face-to-face).

**Step 5:**

Frida on a tie-down, but no Xpen. What trouble we had was during this part. Nick was overexcited and rude. He tried to hump her. He tried to stand with his head over her neck. He was so excited he had no idea whether to shit or go blind. Frida was good as gold and would wait for us to correct him with no reaction on her own (except to look to us). Our corrections of Nick were swift, loud and scary and he learned quickly. Allowed much freer contact during walks.



**Step 6 - TA DA!:**

Now comes the embarrassing confession: Nick and Frida's first offleash meet was an accident. We had been doing the tie-down no Xpen for several days and it had been going very well. We had Frida on a tie down on the patio and had gone inside briefly when we heard a loud bark. We rushed back outside to find Frida had pulled the tie-down loose. Since both dogs were behaving (I think the bark was from excitement - they had been trying to play for a couple of days) we just went with the situation. It all went smoothly with just a few corrections (Mr. Humpy Boy mostly) and lots of recalls when play got a little too exciting. I truly believe that the long, slow introduction process is what saved us from a potentially bad situation caused by our own inexperience with tie-downs (now we know to check our equipment each time we use it).

The time from when Frida came home with us to her being out with Nick with no restrictions (but only when we're home) was about 3 weeks. While it was hard at times to put off integrating Frida into our lives fully - that sad little face was hard to resist - the success we've enjoyed using the slow intro method is undeniable. At no point in time did we feel like we faced with a situation we couldn't handle. Because each stage builds on the previous one and we didn't move on to the next until we felt the dogs were solid, it was a series of successful and positive steps for us and the dogs." - Yvette Stahr

Frida's been bumped from our regular Pit Ed classes and is in our more advanced Canine Good Citizen Prep class now. Yvette and Steve continue to follow the guidelines on these pages: [Multi-dogs](#) and [Keeping the Peace](#) and the two dogs are working out their play style and becoming more deeply bonded. We'll keep bugging them for a video of Frida and Nick having themselves a little play session. What could be better?

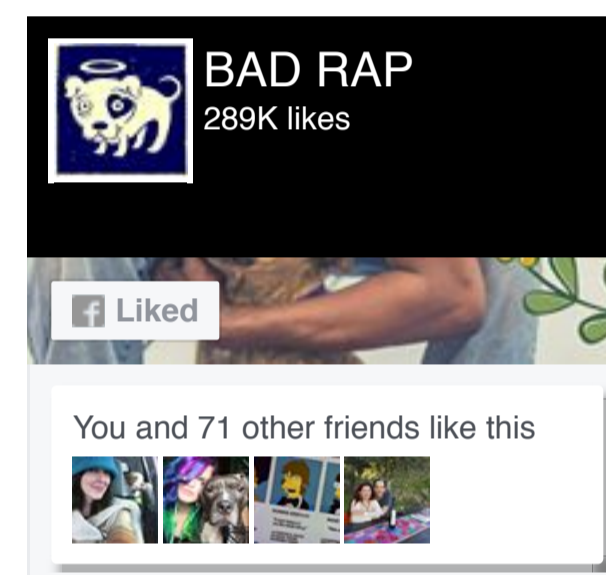
**Moral of the story:** When introducing mature dogs, **SLOW IS GOLD**.  
Congrats, you guys. You're lookin' good!



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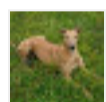




Posted by [Donna](#) at 5:10 PM



## 44 comments:



[Never Say Never Greyhounds](#) said...

Love the play by play. It might not be fun, but its so important to lay all the groundwork in that first month.

6:36 PM



[Rinalia](#) said...

Yes, yes, yes! Yay for Frida and I hope everything moves forward smoothly for all involved.

6:50 PM

[Anonymous](#) said...

Absolutely beautiful job! You two are heroes in my book!

6:55 PM



[Pit Bull Grrl](#) said...

Oh, imagine the impact this type of intro would have if it were posted on the wall of every shelter, and handed out by every rescue and followed by every foster home! So fewer dogs returned to shelters, so many less fights/issues.

Awesome job Yvette and Steve! Lucky Frida!

6:56 PM

[Susan F](#) said...

Well done! It always works well when adopters are patient, pay attention to body language, and don't rush things. But it's so hard to explain this on the phone, so thank you for posting this step-by-step with photos! I hope all adopters (of any breed of dog) get a chance to read about the Stahr's success.

7:25 PM

[Laine](#) said...

Eeeheee, yay for Frida!

This step-by-step is excellent and really shows the benefits of patience and how knowing your dog(s) is absolutely KEY. I'll definitely remember this entry and keep it for any possible, future reference.

Awesome job, Yvette and Steve!

8:26 PM

[Anonymous](#) said...

Donna, I don't know if I am happier for you or Frida! Last year when Osa was going through Pit Ed, it was obvious you loved Frida very much and were worried about her future.

Way to go girls! You made a great team, and now she is part of a real family!

Natalie

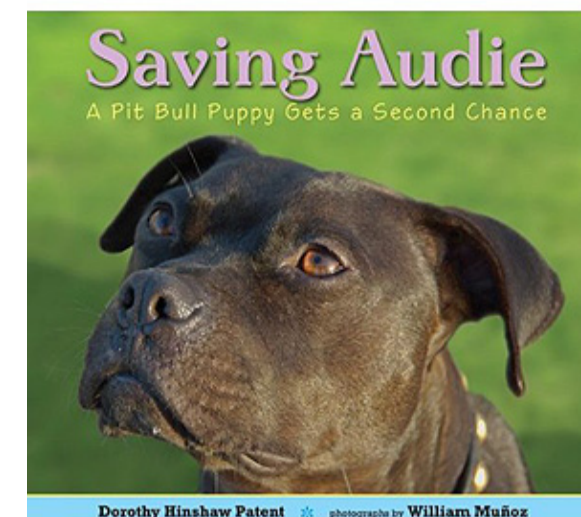
10:09 PM

send a dog a gift

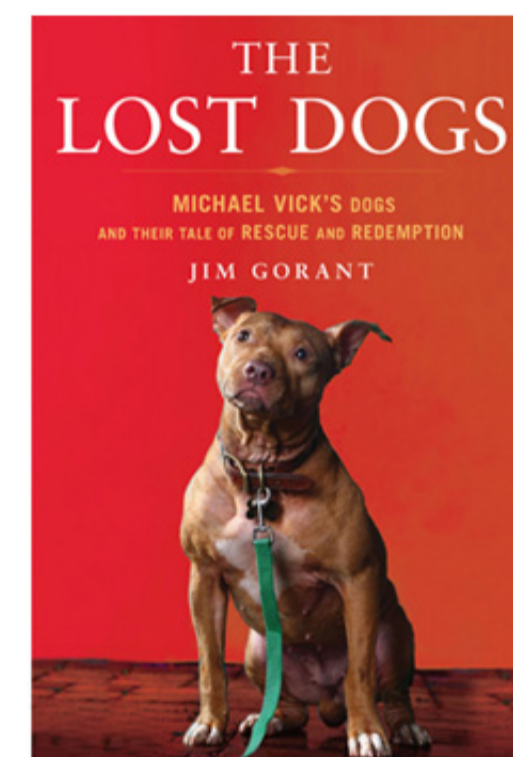
Help for our foster dogs - Thank you!

VINTAGE BADRAP

The Vick dogs who changed it all

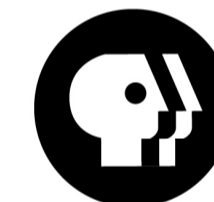


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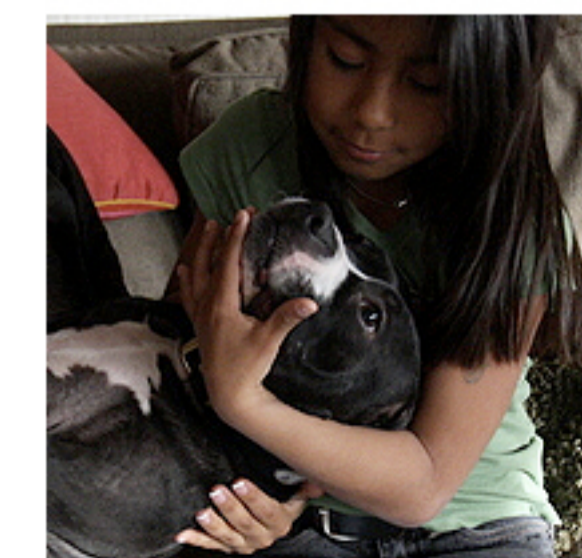
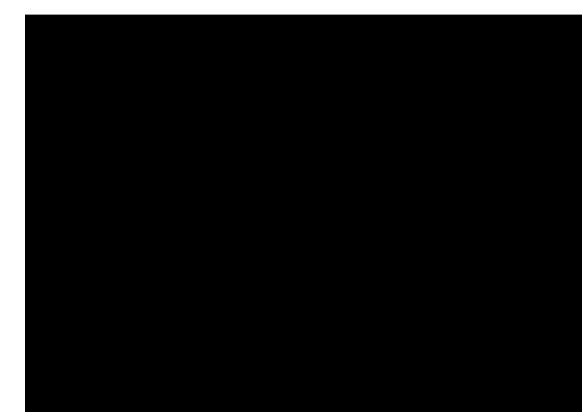


BR's Book Review

WATCH: The Vick dogs on



PBS



[View Washington Post Photo Essay: 'Shelter for the Scarred' by Carol Guzy](#)





**Sam's in Kenya** said...

Excellent write-up!

10:11 PM



**who wouda thunk it??** said...

great work! I am always so happy and so proud of all the good that you and your "peeps" out there! BTW. how did the kids like their wubbas?

4:44 AM



**andre** said...

Brilliant. This sort of information will help so many people/dogs. Brilliant. It would also be invaluable help if you could at some point write about how you sorted Frida's leash-manners.

6:34 AM

**Anonymous** said...

Wow! That's great information. I'm going to print and keep it.

I'd love to add another pit bull to my home, but I have a very dog selective girl. This will be a useful step-by-step guideline when she's ready for a brother.

What a good job by all, peoples and dogs!

s&b/mty

7:12 AM



**The Foster Lady** said...

Donna, exactly as I do it here with only one recommendation. I have a 4 foot baby gate because I REALLY don't take chances. And once they are intro'ed and it seems to be fine, STILL, no valuable resources (toys, treats, food) are lying about to become problematic.

It also helped that Fa-Fa-Frida is a female and Humpy Boy, well, a male obviously..So annoying, my Stan does the same, but all my girls accept it as part of his goofiness. And my girls are NEVER out together. Period. Not this bunch of bitches!

Same sex adoptions are to be avoided as much as possible and any saavy rescue/shelter won't do them with pitbulls/staffies....and a whole string of others (previous post).

And thank you to Yvette for outlining this. I will be passing it along to all I know. Sometimes I wonder what part of the word 'slow' adopters don't seem to understand. It makes all the difference creating peace in the household...and as someone pointed out, lessens the returns of pitbulls (and all dogs honestly) to shelters and possible death because they 'had a fight'.

Welcome home Fa-Fa Frida.

Dina

One more thing...I never flirtpole together. The 'terrier' frenzy can get them going way too much such that it's easy for a fight to break out. A fun toy...SOLO.

7:39 AM

**Millie - Ft Myers** said...

Great story (so happy for Frida) and very useful info, especially for me We have a 10 yr old AmStaff, a 3 year old Catahoula Bulldog, a 1 year old pit mix, add two very senior pit fosters (11 and 12) and all works beautifully, everyone gets along, good play, great manners (AND all females except the Catahoula) then..add a 3 year old Bull Terrier we found in the road half dead (a breed we have never had) and we are at our wits end. Henry, the bull terrier, (finally over his medical issue and neutered) is very well mannered and respectful of the ladies, and even the male Catahoula, but play time with the Catahoula always rapidly escalates into over the top roughhousing and Henry just doesn't seem to "get it". The Catahoula goes to day care and plays well with all dogs. These are all rescues, all spayed and neutered, and Henry is upsetting the balance of my whole pack. He is on leash at all times now when he is out with the pack and still not learning to ratchet down the play. My catahoula listens, but Henry...ARGH!!!!Any advice?

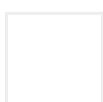
7:42 AM



**pitbull friend** said...

Wonderful! What a happy story! Just curious, though - I've seen other mentions in BR material about only opposite-sex homes. So does that mean that you don't allow adopters to have more than two dogs? Or do you allow it, with extra-careful assessment? Also, I'm surprised about the baby gates. In my experience, any young or middle-aged pit could jump a 4' gate if they felt like it. Am I just hanging out with the athletic ones? Thanks.

10:06 AM



**ingrid** said...

WOW!! 3 weeks????!!

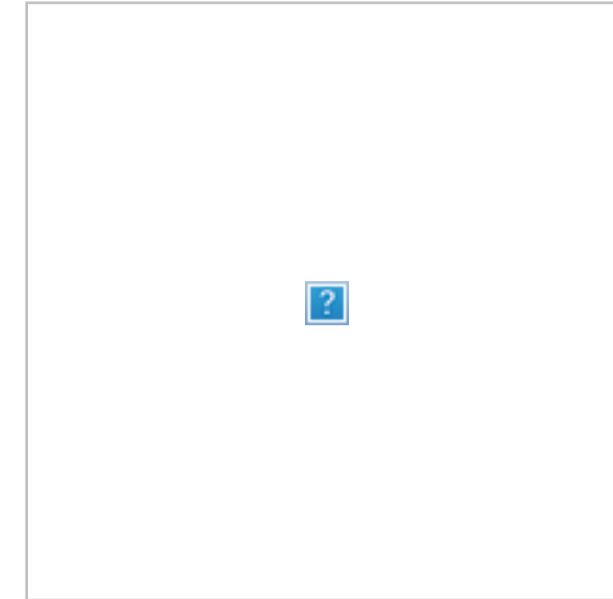
I'm impressed!

I always boast about how pit bulls are such fast learners, but wow!

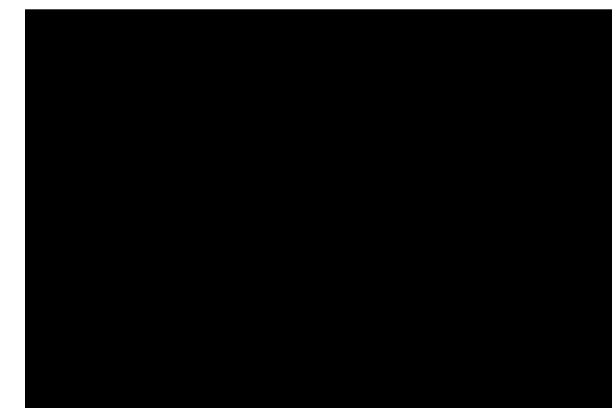
And I never heard of NILIF before, but it was very interesting to read what my pit bull taught me. Good to know I was reading her signs correctly and did the right thing, especially with her attention demanding control issues! (She was a rescue and we had to clear up some "misunderstandings" about our relationship when I first got her)



Jonny on the Rachael Ray Show!



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Fostering: Drive in the slow lane for dog/dog intr...

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Thanks so much for all of this!!

Please keep us posted!!!

2:16 PM

leigha said...

yay for frida and her wonderful patient people.

2:39 PM

veganpitbull said...

I was visiting the Bay Area last fall and met Frida and a BR volunteer (pretty sure it was Yvette) at OAS and was so impressed with the whole program. I fell in love with Frida and am so happy to see her in such a great home!

This is such an awesome write-up of how to introduce dogs the right way; it should be required of all fosters/adopters. I'm so tired of people returning dogs or trying to find a new foster after a few days because things got ugly. These things take time. It took my three rescued pitties (which includes two rowdy, "dog aggressive" males) almost two years to play freely, all three together, without leashes or crates between them. It was slow going but so worth it. We still confine/crate and rotate when we're sleeping, not home, or too busy to supervise and feeding and toy time are solo activities but being able to have those playtimes (which quickly turn to naptimes) where the whole family is in one room is great.

3:14 PM

Dianne in DC said...

Excellent write up. I think many of our "returns" at the shelter are from people who lack patience, and expect it all to be done in a day. Three weeks is about right, and jibes with my experience with fostering Bengal cats with my two Abys.

3:50 PM



The Foster Lady said...

Pitbull Friend, I had to order the 4 foot one online. It's the typical baby gate, just taller. I didn't do the 'sit at the gate, and treat one and then the other' bit until my Lily had been in her crate, in my house for about a month...because I was just learning then and brought her home and there was an immediate issue with my big marshmallow Stan where she bit him on the leg, requiring stitches for him..the first day. So for a month, she was crated while they each absorbed each other's smells and presence. There was no snarling at the crate door when he stopped over to sniff so that's when I knew I could move to the next step. Also, if you have had the dog in the house for about a month, you should get a pretty good idea about just how 'trigger' happy they are. My Leni would never tolerate another female. Period. And I would never do the gate thing with her and I would never pair her for play with any dog other than Stan, who she adores.

5 Years later, Stan and Lily (now 7) are best buds and can be left alone in the house and sleep together as well.

Dina

PS It also helps to have a partner to help out with this. This can be difficult for me, as I live alone and most of my 'friends' are afraid of pitbulls, or have zero dog-handling skills.

8:18 AM



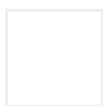
Donna said...

Ingrid - The intro time can take anywhere from 10 minutes to 6 months, depending on the personalities of the dogs involved. Frida had been exposed to other dogs for several months during near-daily sessions while she was living at the shelter, so she had been prepped so to speak for her date with Nick. Had Yvette taken her straight home from the shelter the day she was dumped (she was an owner surrender), I'm pretty sure her outline would've been a few pages longer. ;-)

Pitfriend - Many of us in BR run multi-dog packs at home with same sex dogs 'course, but we generally recommend opposite sex placements to most of our adopters for the best long-term success. If someone's really motivated and into dogs (a skillful reader of dog body language, etc) they can make it work with same sex pairings, but it can be so much more work. These recommendations comes from many different breed rescues so is more of a 'dog thing' than a pit bull thing.

Millie - It's hard to know how to advise you about your BT's rude play style without seeing the dynamics in person. In many cases where dogs don't play well, we'll intercept and use a combination of corrections and time-outs for inappropriate play and praise for when they do well. Most dogs can learn to alter their play style, but its up to us to make sure we've designed good play matches since not every pair is going to bring out the best in each other.

9:14 AM



Laurie said...

This is so helpful, thank you for sharing this! I have two female pit bull mixes at home (one mine, one a foster) and they do great together, but I just brought a male Neopolitan Mastiff foster dog home and have not been able to easily integrate him with the rest of my dogs. It's great to have a step-by-step process to follow.

Laurie

<http://dogfostermom.blogspot.com>

9:43 AM



PBOforlife said...

Thanks so much for the play by play and instructions. We had to put down our Hank down in June and would like to get another dog. We weren't sure how to go about it since our girl, Jessie, has never known any other buddy than him. We will use your tips when the time comes. Thanks for your GREAT work for our breed.

9:45 AM

happily ever after can be temporary

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Fostering. First, the basics.

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1. Volunteer to help local spay/neuter efforts.
2. Supply hand-outs to help educate the public about pit bulls.
3. Volunteer to help update a shelter's website.
4. Donate a Karunda bed so dogs can sleep better.
5. Donate tuff toys like large kong balls.
6. Volunteer to walk dogs that are waiting for homes.

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Anonymous said...

Such a great account of how to integrate a new dog into a multi-dog home. We have a 3 dogs, a male senior pit mix (CGC I might brag), a 5 yr old male coonhound and our newest addition, a little pit girl (18 mos?). Our boys were been used to living with a bossy female we had to put down in December so this probably made her introduction go more easily. However, we did very much the same things that Yvette did and slowly -- thanks to my husband's patient manner. To keep our minds at peace while at work, our pit girl is crated when we are not home. Her play style is very rough which suits our senior pit mix (10.5 yrs) fine and has invigorated him but we always supervise. Goofy Coonhound tried the humpty-hump with her a few times but we got that sorted out. He's really a big chicken around other dogs. (Really should have named him Jethro!) It is important to be vigilant about toys, treats and such triggers and even an equal allotment of affection. Multi-dogs make life hectic, require lots of vacuuming and mopping up but they are a constant source of joy, affection and entertainment. Our new pit girl needs a lot of obedience work still but I'm determined that she earn her CGC.

3:37 PM

Amanda said...

Yvette and Steve, you ROCK! Awesome write-up, very helpful info. So many people are just excited to throw dogs together and it can so easily blow up in their faces. YAY for patience and self-control (by both humans and doggies). =)

One thing I would personally add is that for us, with our resident girlie and any fosters, each dog's relationship and connection with US, the humans in charge, is paramount and comes FIRST! We like a foster to be in our home, bonding with us exclusively and exhibit a trust in the fact that we have things under control before we even think about intros. For some dogs, that comes super fast, for others, it takes weeks. It is always worth it to ensure that connection is there though.

When we first intro--with dropped leashes--hubby and I practice calling the dogs out to us and rewarding them profusely for listening, to make sure they still get it and don't get too wrapped up in each other's presence or playing. Then we let them get back to it, assuming it is going well, and always with supervision of course. ;)

THANKS for taking the time to highlight so many intricate aspects of responsible doggie management!!! I am constantly referring folks to your website and blog. =)

8:52 AM

Anonymous said...

I have done a similar intro for my dog selective male. I foster over in MD and it has worked well everytime. Great story!!!

1:40 PM

LauriS said...

I wanted to commend you for this wonderful article on bringing home a new dog. Regardless of the breed - EVERYONE should follow this!!

Keep up the great work!!

2:49 PM

Masako said...

Thank you so much for this write up! I have recently started fostering Shiba Inus (but have owned them over the course of 20 years). The introductions are critical - and I love this step by step with photos. Thank you!

Hope you don't mind, but we crossposted your instructions on our blog.

awinnieday.blogspot.com

10:43 PM



Amanda said...

I would like to talk to someone about using BAD RAP's blog posts in our foster handbook. I would like to take the text and format it into a document, then put "Used with permission by BAD RAP". I think these posts will help our fosters understand how successful these methods can be.

11:57 AM

Donna said...

Thanks very much Amanda. You're more than welcome to use this text for your hand-book, provided you don't alter the text. And yes, give credit to BR.

Maybe we should create a hand out at some point from this blog post since it's been so helpful? We'll try to do that at some point.

Best luck to you with your work and thanks again.

2:37 PM

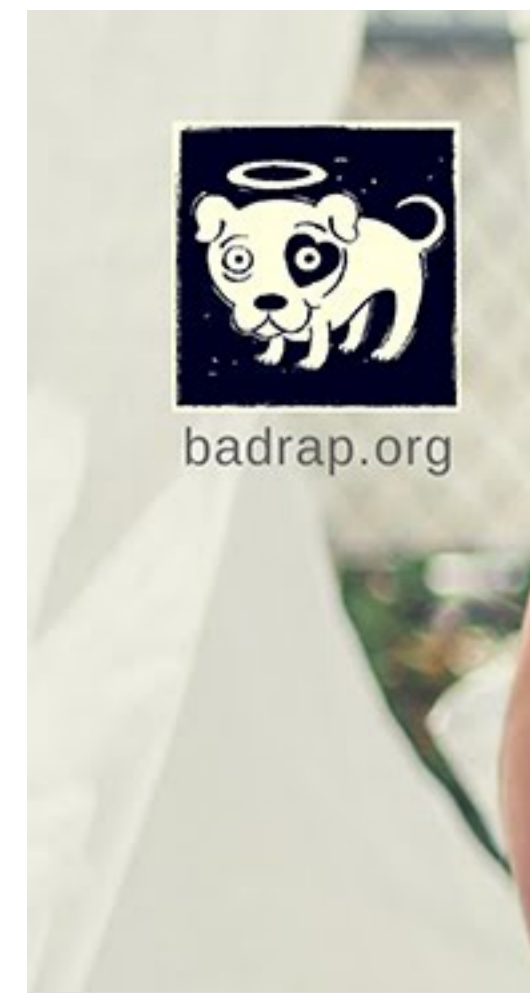
Anonymous said...

This was VERY interesting and so informative. Frankly, everything I read "out there" doesn't tell you HOW to do many of these steps, just to be sure and "socialize" or "introduce" but not really how to do it. Thanks for that!

Also, I was wondering if Nick has been altered, or was the humping his way of showing dominance? Just curious about that aspect. Thanks again for this great info!

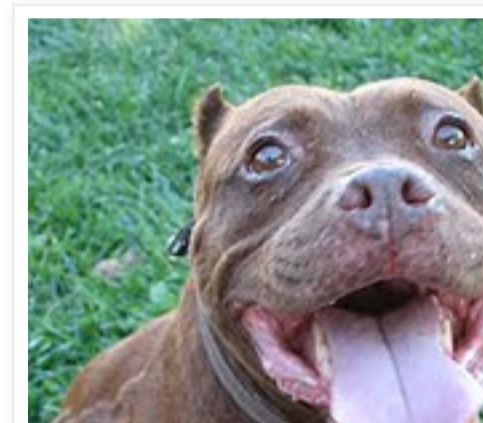
10:50 AM

Donna said...



Sunday, August 30, 2008

## Fostering: Drive in



### Youtube Moment



Tim on CNN for the dogs in Jan '08

a dog is a man's best friend  
a pit bull is a man's best dog

Thanks for the feedback anon. Nick was neutered, but under socialized. Humping is so often just dumb and excitable attempts to 'play' from dogs that haven't been around other dogs enough to learn more appropriate 'games.' Once they've had more practice learning new play styles, they usually drop the humping. And if they don't, this is when the handler needs to step in and pull them off with clear reminders not to repeat.

11:02 AM

Anonymous said...

This was a wonderful example! I have a picky dog of my own and a foster dog! And I have 2 others as well... My dog is not good on the leash! Although she went to daycare all her life, she has a lot of issues with dogs! My foster is very excited on the leash against other dogs as well... We had 2 incidence at home! Right now, my dog has a grudge about my foster, but my foster just wants to play.. My dog has fear and dominance issues! So she attacked the foster 10 days ago and I stopped with my arms and hands where I got a lot of bitings by my own dog! The foster would die but not bite me! I wish I lived closer to BAD RAP but all the trainings we got so far didn't help! We are in Atlanta, GA. I would appreciate any recommendations.

11:58 PM

Anonymous said...

this gives me new hope that i can work out my dogs issues i have one pit and a mix lab both i have rescued they do not get along and ive had to keep them separate. ive been at my wits end with this and was close to finding a new home for one of my babys wish brakes my heart, but now im ready to start again .. thank you

12:45 PM

Jess said...

Thanks for the detailed write-up! I hope to be able to foster someday, even with my very reactive picky dog. Now my question ... in your experience, if there is a "setback" (i.e. a squabble) at any point, has this ever completely poisoned the whole process and made it impossible to get the dogs comfortable together? I'm just wondering because it seems like my dog holds some crazy grudges, which makes me think that one wrong move could make all future interactions tense. I wonder if you have dealt with any other dogs that hold grudges like this.

1:47 PM

Donna said...

Hi Jess - We're so glad to know you're thinking of fostering someday.

'Squabbles' (noisy exchanges with little or no injury) can be fairly normal between dog friends and don't tend to bring grudges, although it's best to learn what caused the argument so the triggers can be removed for future peace.

Full on battles though are another story. Once dogs begin to battle to the point of bad injury, you have a big management job on your hands. Dogs that have been properly introduced and are smartly managed normally don't battle, so handlers have lots of opportunity to spot little issues that need to be resolved pronto. Resource guarding, for example - That annoying behavior brings up some of the biggest conflicts between dogs, so handlers should keep an eagle eye out for body language cues that are typically used to broadcast "this is mine and I don't want you to have it." Nordic breed people can tell you ALL about that problem!

12:37 PM

Scooterdog said...

Thanks so much for this article. I am about to foster a dog and my rescue pointed me to you for guidance on a low and slow intro to my existing dog. Great stuff!

10:47 AM

Me said...

Another thanks for the article! I have a dog with a few issues and would love to get a second dog but worried about how he would cope - now I know just how to get everybody comfortable with each other!

A few questions about the tie down - firstly what length is it and what is it made of? And what happens if the dog on the tie down has leash reaction issues? Could this be a major problem, or theoretically if you've done the groundwork properly would the potential for problems at this stage be minor?

Thanks,

Amy

3:00 PM

RosieF said...

brilliant article, thank you. Just added a 4th rescue to my family of 2 elderly English BT bitches and 5 y .o EBT boy. Newby is biggr, younger and has tried to be a bit dominant, but we are getting there, with time out, lots of walks to lower the energy, particularly just before and just after meals which is when trouble is most likely to start, mainly with one of the older girlies. All dishes washed and put away after separate feeding stations. After tea time & last walk, the older girlie is keen to settle down and this is when we find it is easier to let them relax together. I find a water pistol invaluable. The last squabble was just that, no-one got bitten and I could break it up instantly with loud voice command and a water jet. All your process is so relevant and I am going to bookmark this and keep it on thand, thank you so much !

5:46 PM

superherosandra said...

This was an AWESOME set of instructions for how to introduce dogs and not end up in the ER. How I wish I'd seen this before I took on my first foster dog! She'd seemed really sweet but clearly hadn't been temperment tested with other dogs. It took her about two days in my home (with free run--which they all have ) to bully my two elderly dogs and challenge my dominant female. I now realize how incredibly LUCKY I have been that I drop different dogs into my home without incident (until this one, which ended with me and both dogs with

puncture wounds and all three of us requiring medical attention). Please keep posting these kinds of blogs!

9:05 PM

**Anonymous said...**

I can't remember if I had replied to this before or not. I had read it awhile back and then found it again. Your story is so much like mine. When I adopted Jessie off death row in May 2012, her dog/dog test said she just rushed in, ears back, tail erect but she didn't react any other way. I thought I could handle this. Brought her home, had her in her own bedroom due to kennel cough and started trying to think of how I was going to introduce her to my other 2 dogs.

Eventually, I got the bright idea to do a fence meeting. I let our 2 out back while my husband took Jessie out front and slowly walked around. As you can imagine, it didn't go well and I should have known better. Spit went to flying (Jessie's) and I seen more teeth than I ever wanted to see at one time.

So I hired a "pro"...someone that was supposed to be good with aggressive dogs. What a joke that was. He came out and got my 8 yr old pit mix all riled up (he's over protective of the home). He took Shadow out and walked him up & down the sidewalk with a prong collar and said he wasn't mentally stable. He had my husband bring out Jessie and they took the dogs close to each other but the dogs were nervous, Shadow was already riled up so when the inevitable happened (squabble) they got separated and he told me I'd probably never get them to accept each other.

I was a nervous wreck, sad, crying off & on, not knowing what to do. Did some research and decided, I was going to tackle this no matter what. My husband and I brought Jessie's cage out to the living room and we rotated cages/crates. At first, the original 2 dogs wouldn't walk past Jessie's cage no matter what. We never had any squabbles at the cage surprisingly. They each got to watch us feed the other dog and interact with them so they each knew we were in charge and we loved them all. After a couple weeks of that, we started the group walks. Started out one in front of the other so they could each get butt sniffing time w/o the other really knowing. We'd rotate who was in front. Then we did the side by side walks with my husband and I in between. Then one person in between. Then no one in between. We actually did this for 2 months because I was scared crapless to try a real introduction. During the beginning stages of the group walk, we noticed that Jessie would semi lunge at Shadow when Shadow would bark at something. It was as if barking, growling, etc were the triggers. She was fine until a dog barked or growled.

THEN the unthinkable happened...my husband had let out our 2 dogs and then a while later, he had forgotten and let Jessie outside as well. They had all 3 been out back together for about 10 minutes or so by accident. Thankfully nothing happened. From then on, we let them out together but only under strict supervision. They were actually playing together, etc. She no longer reacts to the other dogs barking and has even come to accept our neighbors 2 big dogs (running up & down the fence together) but as far as any "new" dog, she is still very dog selective.

Rhonda

11:03 PM

**Denise M. said...**

We have four dogs and adopted a blind female dog and her male "companion" dog (both pitbull mixes). The blind dog was not able to be around any other dog, and turned on her male companion dog, so we found her a new home. Unfortunately, during her tenancy with us, our male pitbull and this male often squabbled (no biting, but any face to face confrontation that happened by accident) resulted in a fight. Now that the female is leaving this weekend, we want to try to acclimate our two male pitbulls (the new one is about 1 1/2 years, our resident is 6 1/2 years old). The young male gets along with our other three dogs. My concern is he loves our female pit (who is 2 years old) and I'm worried that the two males may fight over the female. Is it possible for them to get along with these odds against them? Our male was neutered at six months and we just had the younger male neutered about 2 1/2 months ago. Thank you for any help you can provide!

11:37 AM



**Nicole Marshall said...**

Thank you for posting a play-by-play! Hoping this will help me introduce my dog-selective female rescue with my parents' dog-selective female. I have a feeling we may be going slower than 3 weeks, as they are both female and mine is unaltered (she's HW+, which I'm working on, but wanted to wait until she was well, or mostly well, before she goes through surgery). Also, I have another dog and my parents' have two other dogs. Will be a little difficult to juggle all of them, but doable! I'm hoping we can get them to at least tolerate each other within a few months. Again, thanks for posting!

10:41 AM



**Unknown said...**

YES YES YES YES!!! I tell our fosters and everyone wanting to add a new dog to their home YOU CAN NOT GO TOO SLOW! Nobody ever got hurt because you were too cautious. Some dogs take only days to be comfortable and respectful with each other, some take weeks and even months. Until both dogs have a solid base of obedience to you and are demonstrating they are comfortable with the other dog and would like more interaction, just be patient. Even when they indicate they are ready, keep it brief and interrupt to stop it while it's still good, praise, and then allow to resume if appropriate. The more dogs you have the slower this whole process will be. I have six personals (all but one are bully breeds) and 8-12 fosters also bully breeds at any given time. Putting the dogs in the pack with the best chemistry for their need, patiently following the steps, rotation, supervision and excitement management are the keys to a peaceful home. Thank you for a great article!

10:14 AM

**Anonymous said...**

I have 2 3yr old maltipoo and just got a 2mo old labradoodle whos really full of energy. My male is ok with her playing with him but its been 2 days and he keeps trying to hump her not letting her out of his sight. My other one is scared of her own shadow so shes very slowly coming around but growl and snarls at the lil one but wags tail as doing it... so not sure if thats a good thing. Id like to know best way to go about this. The puppy is bigger than my older dogs.

4:54 PM

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