



## Greyhound Connection

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# FOSTER HANDBOOK



Helping you make a difference -  
one greyhound at a time

*Welcome to the wonderful world of fostering greyhounds! Each and every year, thousands of adult greyhounds are released from the racing industry in the United States, destined for a life of rest, play and freedom. For these dogs, everything about relaxing in a home, playing and having the freedom to be a pet is completely foreign. That's where you come in. As a foster "parent" you will have the fun and rewarding job of teaching a newly retired racer how to be a pet, something they have dreamed of their whole lives.*

Being a happy and well-adjusted pet is not an overnight transition for an ex-racer. There are so many things out in the big world that they have never seen before - many of them can be intimidating. They have never climbed stairs, ridden in a car, seen a television, heard the phone ring, interacted with other animals, gone for walks through a neighborhood, or visited the pet store. Many have never been rewarded with hands on affection and a big hug when they've done something right. Most have never played with toys or chewed on a bone.

The foster family is a critical spoke in the adoption cycle at Greyhound Connection. Without foster families like yours, we literally cannot place greyhounds in their forever homes. By opening your home and your hearts to a greyhound for a period of one week to one month, you are the key that enables us to move the dog from the track to its new life. In your home, the greyhound will get used to the sounds and sights of their new lives. They will learn the routine of living in an area larger than a crate, will learn to go outside to potty, and will learn the general routine of your life. Greyhounds are creatures of habit and with consistent guidance in the early days, you will set a pattern that will assist the adopters in welcoming the dog into their home.

As a foster family, you will also have first hand insight into the budding personality of your foster greyhound. By sharing updates with the Home Representatives, they can evaluate applications and make sure greyhounds are placed in the most suitable homes available so that the dog is happy, the adopter is happy and the placement really is forever.

*To assist you in shaping the behavior of your foster and making his/her transition as smooth as possible, here are some guidelines for the early days up until the time your foster is placed:*

**DAY ONE** - Introduce the foster to your home. When you get your new foster home, **introduce them to your dog(s)**, on leash, outside in neutral territory so that your dogs are not threatened by the new intruder. Once inside, guide your foster through your entire house, letting them get a look at every room that will be their new home. Then take them outside to your preferred potty area and allow them to eliminate there. Praise them enthusiastically for their good behavior! You have just taken a critical step towards **housebreaking** your foster. The sooner they understand the right place to potty, the easier housebreaking will be. **But, there could be accidents.**

If you have **cats**, introduce the foster to the cats while wearing the muzzle you were given. Ideally, your cat will show some aggression towards the greyhound - a hiss and pop on the snout goes a long way in teaching respect. Any aggression towards the cat should be corrected with a firm NO. Until you are comfortable that the greyhound will not chase the cat, keep the muzzle on or keep the foster on leash. You can also use a baby gate - elevated so that the cats can fit under - to allow the cats to come and go into the greyhound's area. Do not leave your greyhound alone with cats until you are comfortable that they are trustworthy. With some greyhounds this can take a few weeks.

The first day in a foster home should be **low key** for your foster. Limit visits from curious neighbors, and try not to leave the dog alone until the second day when it will be more comfortable in its new environment. Go about your regular routine, monitoring the dog, but giving him/her some space. Instruct children that they need to give new dog **extra space** or it may snap at them. This is especially important when the dog is lying on its bed and sleeping. **Never wake a sleeping dog by touching it.** Call his/her name from a distance and make sure they are awake before approaching.

It is a good idea to use a **baby gate** to keep the foster where you are; ie; in the kitchen or family room while you are preparing meals and watching TV, in your bedroom at night. By doing this, you can keep an eye on the foster to make sure s/he doesn't mark or have an accident in the house, and can supervise interactions with your pets.

Be sure to take the foster outside to **potty frequently** during the first couple of days. They will be nervous and need to go more often. You should also encourage them to **drink lots of water** which will need to be eliminated. Take them outside first thing in the morning, after feeding, and starting at every hour or when they wake from a nap, and at bedtime. Your foster may need to go out during the night the first couple of nights and may be early risers so be ready to go outside. When taking them from the bedroom to the yard, guide them by the collar or on leash. This will prevent them from walking out of the bedroom - their new "kennel" - and peeing elsewhere in the house. They may also pace during the first night. Try to get them to lie on their beds and settle, but if they will not, take them out in case they do need to potty. If you have a dog door, encourage them to go through it using treats and lots of praise. Be sure to go outside and make sure they are going potty. Just because they can master the dog door doesn't guarantee they are pottying outside.

In a new environment your foster may be hesitant to **eat** and may also back away from you when you attempt to feed them. Put their elevated dish in a quiet spot and give them space. To encourage them to eat you may initially need to add extra incentives such as small amounts of cottage cheese or canned dog food. Add warm water to the food to encourage re-hydration after their trip from the track.

**Security** is a serious concern with any greyhound, *especially* a new foster. An open door or gate is seen as an opportunity to run, so keep all gates and doors secure. Work with the foster to **WAIT** before going through doors and gates. This will show them that an opening is *not* an invitation to run. When telling them to wait, also use hand gestures and a firm voice so that they listen to you. Be sure all members of your household and visitors understand how serious security is for your foster greyhound.

**DURING THE FIRST WEEK** - You will have two main jobs during the time you have your foster. First will be to make them comfortable living in a **home environment**. This entails housebreaking, eating well, getting along with other pets, playing with toys, and getting used to being home without you. The other thing you will be teaching the foster is how to get along out in the **big world beyond your home**.

If you work away from home, you will need to get your foster into your routine so they become used to not having you around all day. Ideally you will have a day or two at home before going off to work so that you can begin **leaving them for short periods**, building up to the length of time you are normally gone. Limit your foster's area to perhaps the kitchen or family room so they are not searching the whole house for you. **Do not close your foster into a room such as a bedroom.** This will likely lead to escape behavior such as clawing at the carpet or chewing on the door jams. Leave the **radio or TV** on at a good volume to drown out unfamiliar noises. Leave several **toys and items to chew**, and put things you don't want them to chew (shoes, TV remotes, newspaper, etc.) out of reach. Don't make a big production of your departure or fuss over them when you return. The less emotional you make the comings and goings, the more they will realize it is part of the routine and you will come back. Be sure your foster has had a chance to potty before you leave and take them out to potty when you return, praising them if they go outside. Bitter apple can be used to discourage unwanted chewing.

It is a good idea to work on getting them comfortable **in your home** first before introducing them to more **new things beyond home**. So after a few days of being at home, taking them for walks in the neighborhood, and leaving them for short periods of time, you will want to take your foster some place in the car where you can expose them to new sights. Your foster may need assistance jumping in your vehicle. Try encouraging them and luring them in with treats. Some "bottom crate" dogs have never had to jump up and will take more time to get the hang of it.

Good places to take your foster for the first time are the **pet store**, a local **park** or somewhere you will find children and other dogs on leash. Avoid places that are very busy as they will be overwhelming. Before you go, make sure your foster's **collar** is tight enough so that it will not slip off if they

startle while you are showing them new things. Give your foster time to look around and investigate new sights and sounds.

Please review and follow the Foster Home Guidelines

### **Meet n' Greets and Other Events**

If you have a foster dog and are available, we ask that you try to attend some of the Events we have scheduled. This will not only give the public an opportunity to meet a greyhound looking for a home, which can be quite compelling, but will also give the greyhound some outside-the-home exposure to new sights and sounds. If you are not available, we ask that you meet another volunteer to have them show the dog whenever possible.

### **Showing Your Foster**

When it has been determined that an approved application is suitable for your foster, the Home Rep will contact you to arrange a time for them to **meet your foster**. Sometimes, if both Home Reps are not available for the showing, you may be asked if you would like to come along in their place. This can be a nice chance to see your efforts pay off and meet your foster's new family. For the showing/placement, please have your greyhound well groomed. This includes: bathing, brushing their teeth, cleaning their ears and trimming their nails. Greyhounds do not require frequent bathing but when they are new and still losing their track coat, more frequent bathing does make them look and feel better.

If your foster has a **favorite toy**, it can be sent along with them to ease the transition. As well, unless they will continue to eat the same brand of food, you may be asked to provide a few cups of **dog food** to transition their diet.

## **Foster Evaluations**

To get an idea of the things you should be watching for with your foster, review the **four online evaluations** on the Greyhound Connection website. Found at the top of the "Foster a Grey" page, these evaluations must be submitted by all foster families after having a foster in their home for 24 hours, 72, hours, 1 week and every week after that. This information is shared with other foster homes and Home Representatives.

Frequently a foster will be **moved** to another foster home if the dog does not fit well with the family. If the activity level in the household is too much for the dog, s/he may be moved to a quieter home. If the dog is not progressing well with the resident cats it may be necessary to move him/her to a home with no cats. Should you need to go away while you are fostering, please notify the Foster Coordinator immediately so the dog can be moved. Foster dogs may not be left with pet sitters or kenneled unless you have received approval to do so. If a dog has been in a foster home for 30 days without being adopted, s/he will be moved to a new foster home so that deep attachments are not formed and to give the first foster home a break. Any time a foster moves to a new home, the new foster family will begin submitting evaluations again, starting with 24 hours.

## **How Often Can We Foster?**

Greyhound Connection appreciates any offer to foster but we realize that every foster family has a limit to how frequently they would like to foster. Therefore, we ask that you keep in contact with the Foster Coordinator to advise when you would like to take a break or resume fostering. You will be contacted each time we are notified that dogs are coming to San Diego, and ask that you respond as soon as possible to let us know if you will be available. Your response will dictate how many dogs we take in.

## What if?

Should you decide that you would like to adopt a greyhound, it is best to notify Greyhound Connection so that you can be put on the list of approved applications. That way, if a dog comes in that you "click" with, you may be considered as a possible adopter for that dog. Otherwise, as indicated on the Foster Agreement, the dog you are fostering is intended for someone else. We realize that "love at first sight" does happen and will try to accommodate such situations if it is the best thing for the greyhound and does not unfairly penalize other applicants.



*Thank you again for your interest in fostering greyhounds. There is no more rewarding way to make a difference to that one greyhound. Give your foster a big hug when you see them off. A piece of your heart will go with each one, but you will keep a piece of each of them in your heart too.*

*Remember, adoption saves the life of one greyhound, but fostering can save many, many more.*