

Foster Care Guide

Thank you for your interest in becoming a foster carer. I am sure you will find fostering an immensely rewarding experience. The following information has been compiled to explain the role of the foster carer and the support we provide during the foster period.

If you have any questions please contact our Foster Care Co-ordinator – see the website for contact details.

General Information

Foster period

Most dogs are sent to foster homes for a period of two to four weeks. However some dogs remain longer, either because they are not yet ready for a new home or because a suitable adoptive family hasn't yet been found. Please give GAP plenty of warning if there is a timeframe coming up where you will be unable to care for your foster dog, and arrangements will be made to return the dog to the kennels.

Some foster carers like to take on a new foster dog as soon as their previous dog finds a home, others like to foster just once or twice a year. GAP is very flexible in this regard. Whatever time you are able to give to the dogs is greatly appreciated. As stated in the Foster Agreement, foster carers must be prepared to surrender their foster dog to a representative of GAP when and where it is requested.



Greyhounds enjoy discovering indoor comforts

Emergencies and veterinary treatment

In the event of an emergency (e.g. the foster dog is severely injured) the foster home should take the dog immediately to the nearest veterinary clinic and notify the GAP Kennel base. GAP will cover the costs of treatment to stabilise the dog's condition in life threatening situations. If the dog is injured but it is not life threatening, the foster home should call the GAP kennel for instructions. Please do not take your foster dog to the vet without first speaking to a representative of GAP (unless it is an emergency). Carers who take a foster dog to the vet without first consulting a representative of GAP may be required to pay for any costs incurred.

If the foster dog goes missing please notify a GAP representative immediately, providing them with a list of all veterinary surgeries in the surrounding area. GAP will then take all necessary steps for the safe return of the dog.

You've fallen in love with your foster dog!

At times foster carers become very attached to their foster dog and wish to keep him. GAP is more than happy to accommodate this as long as the dog is not already reserved for someone else.

If a foster home wishes to keep a dog the usual adoption fee of **\$380** will be charged as this covers veterinary expenses and other costs.

Travel

GAP is a largely volunteer-based organization and we rely on volunteers and those in the racing industry to help us move our Greyhounds around the country as necessary. If you need help with picking up or dropping off your foster dog please let us know. Please also let us know if you are able to help with travel for other hounds.



Greyhounds can be hard to resist

Fostering

There are a few things you can do to get your foster dog off to a great start in his new home. By exposing the dog to as many “new” things as possible you are giving the GAP staff an opportunity to assess the temperament of the dog so that it can be placed in the most appropriate home. Some things you can teach your foster greyhound are listed below.

Leadership

Your foster dog expects you to show him what to do. He knows nothing about being in a home or being a pet, and looks to you for guidance. The first key is to *remain calm*. If your dog exhibits unacceptable behaviour such as jumping up or excessive barking, do not get excited about it. Ignore him, turn your back, or give him a short time out (5 minutes is plenty) either in his bed or crate, or outside. Secondly, *be prepared*. Know where distractions and things likely to cause upsets are: your cats, your other pets, your children. Have your foster dog on lead and muzzled until he can cope with these things without becoming overexcited. *Understand your foster dog's perspective*. If he gets overexcited, remain calm yourself and turn him away. Walk him about until he seems relaxed, and then return. Your dog is processing new experiences. Over exuberance, growling, barking and leash-pulling are symptoms of this, not disobedience, and need to be treated as such. *Praise* the dog for anything he does right. *Do not make a fuss* if you think the dog is frightened or upset – the dog interprets this as praise for displaying the fearful behaviour.

Furniture

Do not allow your foster dog on the furniture - beds, chairs, couches etc are off limits! In his new home, your foster dog may not be allowed on the furniture. If he's used to getting on the couch, it can be a very hard habit to break.

Living indoors

All of our Greyhounds are expected to live inside as part of the family in their new home and getting them used to living indoors and house rules is an important part of foster care. When he first arrives, confine him to a single room, preferably the room where his bed will be. Gradually introduce him to the rest of the house, on lead to begin with. After every exploration, return him to his bed, praise him, and give him a

“time out” to process his new learning. Whilst it is important to get your foster dog used to living indoors, it is also important that they are used to spending time outdoors as well.

Stairs

Many greyhounds have never had to walk up or down stairs, and some find them awkward or even frightening at first, especially if the steps have a slippery surface. Greyhounds are very long in the body and also have a very high centre of gravity - this can make them a little clumsy. Unless stairs are essential to enter your home, introduce them when your dog has settled in a little. Start with low sets of three to six steps if possible, and then introduce steeper stairs or those with varying surfaces (carpet, cement, wooden floorboards, linoleum etc.). Remain firm and calm yourself. Coax the dog, but do not praise him excessively until he has climbed or descended the stairs. If he is very reluctant then it may be helpful to take his weight while he works out how to move his legs. This can easily be done by using a towel as a sling under his chest. You may need to move his feet individually for the first few steps. After that he will probably walk beside you with increasing confidence! Despite the above, many greyhounds will have no difficulty with stairs right from the outset.

Floor surfaces

Often greyhounds have never had to deal with slippery floor surfaces like tiles, linoleum or polished floorboards. Take the dog across surfaces such as this on leash to begin with, and when he walks calmly, praise and give a treat. If a new dog is very hesitant, placing squares of carpet pieces, towels or mats across the floor at intervals may help, later increasing the distance between the floor coverings, thereby requiring the dog to walk on the floor surface.

Glass windows or doors

Some dogs will not recognise glass as being a solid barrier when first brought into a house. Showing the dog around each new room on a lead and gently tapping on windows or glass doors may be all that is required. Temporarily placing a strip or two of masking tape across glass barriers may make them more obvious. In cases where strong visual stimuli are present on the other side of the glass (e.g. cats), and the dog is showing excessive interest, drawing the curtains or removing the dog from that room may be necessary.



A few smears on the window can help

Household noises

The sound of household appliances such as televisions, hairdryers, food processors, vacuum cleaners etc. can be frightening to any dog that has never experienced these before. Even the flushing of a toilet can be quite novel. Allow the dog to be in the house and experience these sounds for short periods until he pays no attention to them.

Toilet training

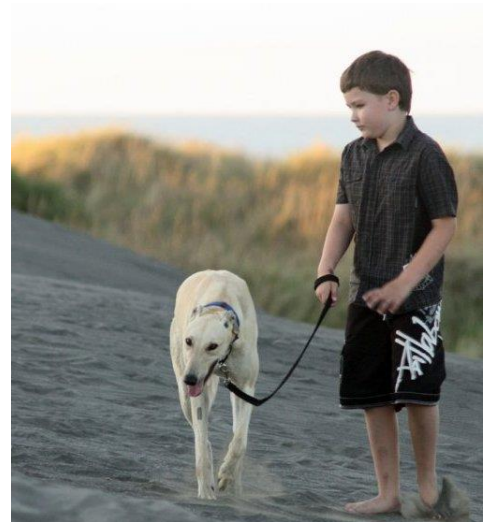
Greyhounds are usually very clean dogs. However, they need to know where their toilet will be! When your foster dog first arrives, take him outside to where you would like him to toilet and walk him around. When he toiles, which most will do, praise effusively. For the first couple of days, take the dog to the toilet

every couple of hours, and praise as soon as he toilets. Toilet the dog before naps, after naps, after meals and after play. If you observe the dog restless or pacing, take him out to the toilet. Do not expect the dog to ask to go out, many will not. Gradually, over a few days, increase the intervals between toilet breaks until a mutually acceptable routine is established. Some males may need to learn the difference between indoor (potted) plants and outdoor vegetation. It is important over the first few days to watch the greyhound closely when he is inside your house, so that you may correct him immediately if he tries to go to the toilet. When catching the dog in the act, say a firm NO and immediately take the dog outside. When he then continues to go to the toilet outside, praise him profusely. Do not chastise the dog if he has an accident inside but you are not there to catch it in time. Correcting the dog after the event will only serve to confuse and frighten the dog – corrections must be made at the time of the indiscretion, and not afterwards.

Children

Although not all foster homes will have children, it is helpful to let the dog meet children, for example at a local park or sports field, especially on weekends. Some dogs love being around kids, others become aloof and would obviously prefer to be elsewhere. Children tend to move rapidly, not always in a coordinated manner, and may shriek out in high-pitched tones. To a young excitable greyhound, this may be an incentive to chase. Such a desire may be exacerbated when skateboards or bicycles are added to the picture.

The majority of greyhounds are excellent with children in the home environment, preferring to walk away if harassed by a persistent child, but close supervision is essential as with any breed. Any tendency for the greyhound to exhibit dominance posturing towards a child, barking, growling etc., should be noted and corrected. Providing information on your foster dog's behaviour with children is very helpful.



Older children can also help with training

Socializing with other dogs

It is vital that during his stay with you, your foster greyhound is properly socialized with other dogs while out and about. When taking your foster greyhound for walks, it is essential that you let him meet and greet other dogs of all breeds and sizes. When out walking make sure you are relaxed, assertive and calm. Remember, the dog will pick up on any nervousness you might have and will get stressed itself. A stressed dog will pull on the lead, growl at other dogs and be difficult to control. When you see another dog at the park or on the street say hello to its owner and ask their permission for your greyhound to meet his dog and say hello. It is usually a great conversation starter to explain that your greyhound has just retired from racing, etc. You can also put a GAP foster greyhound vest on your greyhound when walking him –this way, people know that the dog is 'special' and is also a great plug for GAP.

When meeting other dogs do not hold your dog on a tight lead. Allow him to sniff the other dog and move around at the end of the lead. If your dog shows any sign of discomfort or fear eg stepping back, growling, whining, say a firm but gentle “No” and place your own body between your foster dog and the other dog. Do not jerk your leash or end the interaction, unless the other dog seems unfriendly or aggressive.

Remember, your foster greyhound has been carefully assessed at the kennels and is NOT dog aggressive. If he growls or exhibits other behaviour you are unsure of, he is most likely frightened. Do not pat and

reassure him, as this tells him that the growling or other fearful behaviour is a good thing for him to do. Instead, use your assertive leadership skills to show your foster greyhound that you are in control of the situation. Place your foster dog behind you, and when he is calm, pet him AND the other dog. Then allow them to sniff again.

If the other dog seems aggressive, over-exuberant and trying to jump on your foster greyhound, or afraid, cowering etc, end the interaction at once. Give your greyhound a firm, happy “Come” and walk off briskly and calmly. This teaches your foster dog an excellent way of avoiding situations with other dogs he doesn’t like- he learns to remove himself from the situation.



Most greyhounds enjoy learning to play with other breeds

Other pets

Greyhounds are generally used to being around other greyhounds, but many have little or no experience of different dog breeds, cats or other pets. GAP’s kennel managers will give you an indication of your foster dog’s behaviour around small animals. While some individuals can never be fully trusted, many will learn to accept other pets if introduced slowly and carefully. Only dogs assessed as being suitable for home with cats will be given to foster carers with cats.

Introductions must always be carried out on lead, and with the greyhound properly muzzled, until the dog’s reactions can be further assessed. If the foster carer has to leave, even for a brief time, the greyhound should be separated from other animals until the carer feels confident that the dog poses no threat to their other animals. Risks should never be taken with the safety of your own pets. Please do also be aware that while the greyhound may appear fine with cats inside the house, they can act quite differently when the cat is outside. Err on the side of caution and leave the dog muzzled until you are completely sure your own animals are not at risk.



Meeting the family cat

Possessiveness

Two things a Greyhound (or any other dog) may feel possessive about are food and its sleeping quarters. During the fostering period, the dog should learn to accept its food and food bowl being handled in a non-threatening manner. If you have other dogs, your foster greyhound may be fed with them. If you do this, ensure there is at least 1.5 metres between each food bowl, and feed your foster greyhound on leash for the first two or three days until you ascertain how “pushy” he is about food. Always feed your own dog(s) first and then the foster dog last - the foster dog is the lowest member of the pack.

After the first three or four days, when the dog should be learning to trust the foster carer, food can be added to the bowl gradually by hand as the dog is eating. Eventually, by the end of the foster period, the dog should accept the food bowl being taken away and, ideally, food or other objects being taken from its mouth. Needless to say, care should be taken in these circumstances and an assessment of the dog’s temperament made before proceeding.

The greyhound should also permit its bedding to be handled, sat in etc. Sleep-space aggression is reported in some greyhounds, usually in response to being woken or disturbed suddenly during a nap. Some greyhounds do sleep with their eyes open, so it is important to ensure that the dog is awake before touching and surprising it. Greyhounds tend to sleep very deeply, and may take a while to arouse. As they are generally housed individually in racing kennels, they are not used to other dogs, children etc. tripping over them in their sleep.

Car rides

Most greyhounds are veterans when it comes to rides in the car, and usually love to go on an outing. However, getting into and out of a car usually needs to be taught. Trainers will generally lift a dog into and out of the vehicle to avoid injuries. The easiest way to begin is to lift the front end of the dog and rest its forefeet on the seat or tailgate. Then transfer your hands to the rear end of the dog and lift the back legs in. Most dogs quickly learn to hop in themselves. Experience at climbing onto a rear (bench) seat of a car and lying down whilst driving should be gained as not all adoptive families will own station wagons. It is also important to teach the dog not to get into or out of the car until you have asked it to do so.

Grooming

Racing Greyhounds are quite used to being bathed, groomed and massaged. However, it is important to determine that the dog does not have any “sensitive” areas, which may indicate injuries. The dog should accept its feet being handled, nails clipped, ears cleaned and eyes and mouth inspected, as well as being groomed all over with a soft brush.

Obedience training

Each foster carer is expected to continue teaching their foster dog the following basic commands:

- **WAIT** – this means Stand still or Stand back. Use it when leading your dog through a gate, when getting into and out of the car, when on a walk and you wish to stop for a period and before feeding.
- **HEEL** – most greyhounds are used to walking on the right hand side of the handler. Try to accustom the dog to walking on either side of you, with their shoulder beside your leg.

- LEAVE – Use this to take away a toy from your greyhound, or if you observe him doing something you would rather he wasn't – rolling in sheep poo, perhaps!!
- COME – most greyhounds have no idea of recall. Begin teaching basic recall on lead in your garden. Take some treats that your foster dog likes, walk around with a loose lead, then using a cheerful, high-pitched tone, say <dog's name> COME! Almost all greyhounds will turn to see what the fuss is about – give them praise and the treat.

All of these things will help to make your foster greyhound a pleasure to be around and will help us to get more of these deserving, lovely dogs into good homes.



Learning to wait for dinner

Misbehaviour

Please be firm with your foster dogs. By being soft, and allowing undesirable behaviour to continue, you are extending the fostering process, confusing the dog, and increasing the likelihood that the dog will fail. By being patient, fair and firm, you are giving the dog the rules he needs which will make him happy, and you are helping him be a well-mannered dog that is a pleasure to be around. As mentioned earlier, racing Greyhounds are used to a fairly regimented life with few options or choices to make in its day to day activities. The majority of Greyhounds are creatures of habit, and are most relaxed when a set routine is in place. Family life does not always fall into a perfect routine, but establishment of set meal times and regular exercise and toileting opportunities will help a new greyhound to feel at ease.

When a greyhound is suddenly given the freedom of an entire house, and has some choice in how it spends its time, it may revert to a (temporary) second puppyhood. It is important that some basic ground rules are established for the dog early in the foster period and that all members of the family abide by them. Restricting the dog to certain rooms in the house, at least initially, may make supervision easier. This may be achieved by simply keeping doors closed or by using baby gates or other barriers.

A soft bed of their own, located in a quiet corner, should be provided, and the dog encouraged to retreat there with the command "BED". The bed should be positioned so that the dog can observe most of the household activities without getting in the way.

A particular vice of greyhounds newly introduced to the home is pinching food left on kitchen benches or tables (also known as "counter surfing"). Because greyhounds are so tall, reaching such places is quite easy. The obvious solution is not to leave anything tempting lying within reach. Keeping one or more squirt bottles filled with water and ready to use can be effective in stopping such practices.

Please remember to **praise** the dog when it does the right thing.

When you observe undesirable behaviour, give a firm "No" and intervene. Your intervention might take the form of a water bottle, a loud "uh-uh-uh", or a removal of the dog from the situation.

Use of the water bottle

A water bottle can take the form of a Pump or other drink bottle, a child's water pistol, an old and well-washed squirt bottle. Keep two filled at any time, and store them in the fridge: this ensures your water is cold and uncomfortable for a misbehaving greyhound.

When using the water bottle it is a good idea to use a sharp "uh-uh-uh" at the same time. Soon, you'll only need to say "uh-uh-uh" and the dog will know!

The great advantage of a water bottle is that the correction can reach the dog at a distance. Therefore the dog associates the correction with the behaviour it was offering at the time, rather than with us grabbing it. Think of the following scenario from the dog's point of view.

Jimmy the foster dog has found a lovely tasty sheepskin rug on the floor, and has begun chewing it. Foster carer Chris shouts 'Bad dog!!' Jimmy wags his tail in response. He's heard plenty of people shouting at him as he flashed past the stands on the way to the winning post!

In one scenario, Chris rushes over, grabs Jimmy's collar and puts him outside, scolding Bad dog! Jimmy is confused. Up till now, Chris has been a good friend of his! He doesn't understand why all of a sudden Chris grabbed his collar and put him out the door. All he can think about is getting back inside, and back into that tasty lure that Chris so thoughtfully installed on the lounge floor. It was such a shame Chris interrupted him!

In the other scenario, Chris picks up the handy water bottle, takes aim, and gives Jimmy a sharp squirt in the face. Jimmy jumps back, shaking his head. Oh my! He approaches the rug again, and Chris squirts a second time. Jimmy is flabbergasted. Apparently grabbing lures in this kennel means getting squirted in the face. He's not interested in any part of that, so he turns away from the sheepskin and trots over to the door to see if his new friend Chris has any more of those tasty bacon treats.

As you can see above a water bottle is a very effective, very simple and very kind method of correction. It is useful for barking/whining, chewing, cat-introductions, digging, and can even be taken with you on walks to be used if the dog is inappropriate when he sees a cat in the distance.

Some misdemeanours cannot be discouraged with a water bottle for practical reasons. Jumping up for example can be annoying and, for some, intimidating. Some dogs jump up for attention and may even have been taught this by their trainers. To stop this habit ignore the dog and turn your back to them only giving them attention when they have calmed down.

Many foster dogs whine from time to time during their first night in their foster home. Some may whine because they need an extra toilet break due to the disruption of their routine. Whatever the reason, it is a good idea to take a whining foster dog out to toilet, for two reasons - one, in case they do need to toilet, and two, it teaches the foster dog that whining means being taken out to toilet. Never play with, pet or cuddle a dog which is whining in the night. If the foster dog whines three or more times during the night, resort to the water bottle.

Don't ever presume that just because something hasn't happened before that it won't happen.

Just because your foster dog hasn't snapped at your cat in 2 days doesn't mean that it won't. Always err on the side of caution and ensure that you're providing a safe home for both your family and your foster dog. The fostering process is a vital period for assessing each dog's temperament and responses to adults, children and other animals. It is important that all the dog's responses, both good and bad, are reported. This then enables GAP staff to ensure that the dog is then placed in the most appropriate adoptive home.

Promoting a responsible image for GAP and providing a safe home

It is important to remember that both you and your foster dog are ambassadors for GAP. Any inappropriate behaviour may ultimately affect GAP's image as a responsible and professional organisation and may deter someone from adopting a Greyhound. Therefore **NEVER UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES** allow your foster greyhound to be off lead in a public area.

However we'd love you to bring your foster hound to events in your area! People love to meet a greyhound that is looking for a home and you may even be able to help find a permanent home for your hound this way. A great advantage is that you are more likely to meet up with your hound later on.



Finding a new home

Compassion, patience and understanding

Like humans, each dog is an individual. Greyhounds as a rule are quiet, well mannered, affectionate dogs. However, some dogs can initially be difficult to deal with. They may bark, whine, go to the toilet in inappropriate places, and exhibit other undesirable behaviours. The role of the foster carer is to assist the dog with getting over these problems with patience, persistence, training and compassion. If you find you having difficulty coping with the dog's behaviour or if the dog is demonstrating severe, destructive and dangerous behavioural problems then please contact the GAP kennel base and they will arrange for the removal of the dog from your home.

With compassion, patience and understanding, you'll be able to turn a keen athlete into the ultimate couch potato!

What support does the foster home receive?

Each Greyhound in a foster home is provided with Nutrience dog food (a premium quality food), generously supplied by Petware Ltd. So apart from the addition of some table scraps (meat, chicken, cheese, pasta, rice, etc), the foster home is not burdened by feeding costs.

All dogs are wormed and treated for fleas (thanks to Virbac) prior to arriving at a foster home. Most will have already undergone their full range of treatments, including a thorough health check, neutering, and vaccination. A collar and training muzzle are provided and during the cooler months, a warm coat is also made available. If you need any other items please let the kennel staff know.

Extensive follow up and monitoring of the dog in foster care is made, generally by phone. We realise that foster carers are generously opening up their homes and hearts to these dogs, and all support/advice

necessary will be given promptly. We also appreciate that foster homes may not wish to care for dogs continually. Some may only try it once and decide it's not for them. Others may want a break between dogs, or may have holidays or other commitments planned for the near future. Whatever offers an approved foster home can make will be accepted gratefully.

Thank you for opening your heart and home to some of our wonderful greyhounds!

