

The shelter can be a stressful and overstimulating environment, and adjustment takes time. We often don't know what a dog's routine might have been before coming into us! Many foster dogs adjust quickly to a home, but they may still need time to settle.

We often reference the "rule of 3s": about 3 days to decompress, 3 weeks to start settling in, and 3 months to feel fully at home. Every dog is different, so pay attention to body language and adjust expectations as needed.

Patience, predictable routines, and low-pressure enrichment in the early days make a big difference.

We're here to support you along the way, so don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions or need anything.

Crates

A crate is a safe, quiet space where your foster dog can rest and decompress. It gives them a predictable place of their own while they adjust to a new environment and is a key tool for housetraining.

- Set the crate up in a calm area of your home.
- Keep the door open at first and allow your foster dog to explore it on their own.
- Use treats, meals, or chews in the crate to help promote positive associations.
- Cover the crate if needed to help reduce visual stimuli.



Scan here to learn more about crate training!

Freedom Harness

We use Freedom Harnesses for most of our foster dogs. These harnesses apply gentle pressure to help with leash training while avoiding strain on the neck.

- Be sure the harness fits snugly but comfortably (check the fit regularly, especially if your foster dog is gaining or losing weight)
- Attach the leash to both the front ring on the chest and the back ring.
 - Using both attachment points gives you better control and provides clearer feedback for your foster dog when leash pressure is applied.



Scan here to learn more about freedom harnesses, including fitting help!



Treat Pouch

A treat pouch helps you keep treats (and poop bags) easily accessible while walking or training with your foster dog. Having rewards ready makes it easier to reinforce calm, positive behavior in the moment.

- Use treats to reward loose-leash walking, check-ins, and calm behavior.
 - If your foster dog is on a weight loss plan or special diet, use a portion of their regular kibble as treats
 - Other treat options include training treats (lower-calorie, small treats), cheese, or baked or steamed chicken with no oils or spices. Be sure to use these in moderation and check with the foster team if your dog is on a special diet!



Training Treats

A treat pouch helps you keep treats (and poop bags) easily accessible while walking or training with your foster dog. Having rewards ready makes it easier to reinforce calm, positive behavior in the moment.

Enrichment Feeders

Enrichment feeders encourage your foster dog to sniff, think, and problem-solve while eating. These activities provide mental stimulation and can help reduce stress, boredom, and fast eating.

- Puzzle toys: Add kibble or treats and let your foster slide, lift, or move pieces to access the food. Start with easier puzzles or only partially closing slots and increase difficulty as your dog learns.
- Puzzle bowls: OK to just offer a meal in them, but for a step harder fill with water, dog-safe veggies, wet food, or soaked kibble, then freeze for a longer-lasting enrichment activity.
- Snuffle mats: Hide kibble or treats in the fabric folds to encourage natural sniffing behavior.
- Kong Wobblers and Pipe Feeders: Fill with kibble or small treats and allow your foster dog to nudge, roll, or tip the feeder to release food. Introduce slowly, as some dogs need time to figure them out.

Rotate enrichment feeders rather than using the same one every day to keep things interesting and prevent boredom.



Scan here for more DIY enrichment ideas

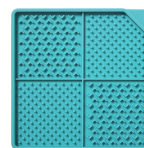


Edible Enrichment

Edible enrichment encourages licking, chewing, and focused engagement, which can be very calming for foster dogs. These activities help reduce stress and provide a positive outlet during rest time, crate time, or transitions.

- LickiMats: Spread a thin layer of wet food, canned pumpkin, yogurt, or soaked kibble. Freezing can make it last longer and increase the calming effect, and some have suction cups so you can stick it to the floor or a vertical surface. *Never leave dogs alone with a lickimat so they don't chew it up!*
- Kongs: Fill with a mix of a spread like peanut butter and kibble or dog-safe veggies. Freezing is recommended for longer-lasting enrichment, we send two so you can always have a frozen one on hand!
- Longer-lasting chews: Options like bully sticks, pig ears, or tracheas can provide appropriate chewing and stress relief. Give in moderation, 1-2x a week max, and always supervise and remove small or sharp pieces. Only give chews ok'd by the foster team, some chews like rawhides can be very dangerous!

Just like enrichment feeders, rotate edible enrichment in and out to prevent boredom!



Scan here for Kong recipes



Adaptil Spray

Adaptil Spray is a pheromone spray that can help reduce stress. It's not a cure-all, but a tool to use with other tools! Spray it on a bandana you tie around your foster's neck, on bedding, or even on your clothes when interacting with your foster dog.



ashevillehumane.org/get-involved/foster/resources

