



**SETTLING IN**  
-  
**STEP BY STEP!**



Adopting a rescue dog is such a wonderful thing to do: you're giving a forgotten soul the chance to have the life every dog deserves. We at the Cadela Carlota Animal Protection Association are truly grateful to you for making that choice! By now, you've no doubt already prepared to welcome your new arrival with heaps of love and are looking forward to those first days spent together as a family.

You've done your research,  
you're all set, you're ready to go! ♥

While we humans tend to know exactly what's coming, the circumstances for your new dog are often a bit unclear and confusing:

- The first car ride in ages.
- The first roof over their head.
- Four solid walls – yikes, where's the exit?!
- Mmm, a cosy blanket! Yes, this is good!

Unfortunately, we can't tell our dog that everything's going to be alright – that they're home now!

But thankfully, there are a few simple steps we can take to make their move-in as stress-free as possible. In this small guide, we've gathered tips on how to recognise your dog's stress signals, how to respond to them, and how to turn any initial challenges into a peaceful transition into your life together!

### **Table of Contents:**

- The 333 Rule
- Understanding Body Language
- Tackling Common Hurdles



## **The 333 Rule:**

3 Days, 3 Weeks, 3 Months – a Lifetime!

Every dog settles into their new home at their own pace. But one thing's for sure: every dog will go through different stages, "warming up" to their new surroundings bit by bit before they can fully show their true personality.

This process takes time, and it may require a bit of patience – but in the end, you'll have a dog who feels safe and loved by your side!



### **3 Days**

During the first few days, your new dog will likely feel a bit nervous. The sudden change in surroundings, those new smells and sounds – and they might not even be sure yet that you're not going to hurt them!

Many dogs withdraw during this phase, hiding, and they may struggle to eat or drink. Others might try to escape or become anxious.

This can be tricky for you too: you've been eagerly waiting for this moment and want to provide well for your rescue dog. You want them to feel at ease!

Their uncertainty might make you wonder:

*“Am I doing this right?”*

*“Is it okay that they're not eating?”*

*“Maybe they just don't like me!”*

But don't worry – the first few days are a bit of an emotional rollercoaster, surely for the both of you. Give yourselves space, time, and practice patience. Your dog will soon realise that you're their new family, and they'll not just like, they will love you!

## Quick fix:

Dogs thrive on routine! Set up a calm routine that meets their needs without overwhelming them:

- Short, relaxed walks around the neighbourhood will help them get their bearings and strengthen your bond as a “new pack.”
- Keep interactions with other dogs or neighbours brief and avoid any excitement from playing or petting.
- Stick to set feeding schedules and allow mealtime to happen in a peaceful space with little distraction.



- Make sure there's always a water bowl in a quiet, easy-to-reach place.
- Set up a comfortable, peaceful retreat where your new dog can find space alone to rest: nobody should approach or touch them here. This will be their "time-out" space when they feel overwhelmed.
- Schedule regular rest times, both at night and during the day. During these times, remove toys and other distractions so your dog can sleep. They have a lot to process and shouldn't be overstimulated by accident.
- Don't introduce other pets or children just yet – give your dog time to adjust.

### **3 Weeks**

They're eating, they're drinking, and – uh oh – they've had an accident on the rug!

After the first few weeks, your dog will be getting more comfortable. You can start introducing family members and other pets gradually. Remember to keep initial introductions short and always supervise.

By now, your dog will have figured out that you mean well and will probably be loving their new food. They might even let you rub their belly, and their personality will start to shine through as they shed the anxiety of their past! Keep it up, you're doing so great! 😊

At this stage, some unwanted behaviours might start to show up, and that can be a little worrying. Your new dog won't give up their toy, digs up the garden, or steals your shoes?

Don't worry: this is them showing you who they were before your life together! Be extra supportive during this learning phase: train together and gently set boundaries in a kind but firm way.

A dog school can also be a brilliant help at this stage!

### **3 Months**

You've made it: you and your rescue dog have settled in, learned about each other, and have built a strong bond.

Thanks to training and dog school, you've managed any early challenges with ease! Your other pets have fully accepted the newcomer after a careful, supervised introduction. You're enjoying a shared routine, long walks, and mutual trust.

No one remembers the shelter anymore! Cadela Carlota is a distant memory - we want to be forgotten:

Welcome Home! ♥



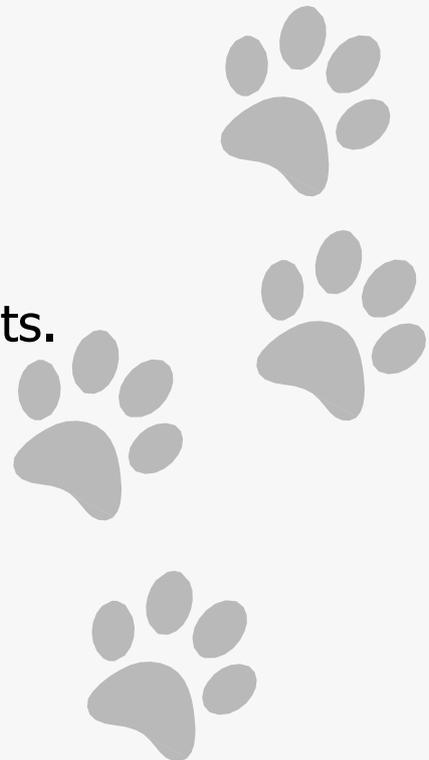
## **Understanding Body Language**

During the settling-in phase, you'll need to get to know your new companion. This period is especially sensitive for your dog, and they're often feeling uncertain. To help foster positive, trust-building communication, it's important to interpret some key body language signals correctly. This way, you'll better understand how they're feeling and avoid any miscommunication that could hinder their adjustment.

### **How Does My Dog Show Stress or Discomfort?**

- Panting without thirst or heat, like during thunderstorms or fireworks.
- Yawning without being tired, such as in the car or in noisy places.
- Licking their lips, especially when being petted or hugged when they don't want it.
- Moving away from the source of stress, especially other animals or people.

- Shifting their weight away from the stressor.
- Tension in their body, like when meeting other dogs.
- Lowering their head to avoid being petted.
- A sideways glance that shows the whites of their eyes.
- Ears laid flat back and tail lowered.
- Looking around nervously, especially during fireworks or loud noises.
- Pacing without a clear purpose.
- Lots of blinking.
- Very slow, deliberate movements.



It's important to note that dogs don't respond to soothing gestures the same way we do.

While a hug might comfort a scared child, it's not the best way to help a scared dog!

Instead, try to identify the source of stress and remove it (e.g., noise, running children, or other pets). Then, give your dog some space to retreat, and don't escalate the stress by trying to approach or hug them.

If their initial attempts to communicate are ignored, they may escalate: growling, baring teeth, and snapping are an insecure dog's final pleas for space and peace.

But if you get the hang of interpreting their signals and responding correctly, you'll avoid this!

## **Tackling Common Hurdles**

As much joy as a new dog brings, the first few days can come with their fair share of challenges: a little pee here, a chewed-up shoe there – it's important to act quickly so these small missteps don't overshadow the excitement of adoption!

Fortunately, most of these little misdemeanours are quickly forgotten once the right training and some patience are introduced.

### **Potty-Accidents**

Maybe your rescue dog has never lived in a home before. Or perhaps they've forgotten during their time at the shelter that it's not okay to go inside.

When accidents happen, act quickly: calmly stop them mid-pee and take them straight outside. Wait until they finish, then reward them with lots of praise!

Your dog wants to make you happy, so show them how much you appreciate their "outside" business!

## **Differences with other Pets**

Properly introducing new pets is key to ensuring they get along well. Dogs can be territorial and existing pets may be protective of their home and family.

The first few days are very stressful for your new dog. Introducing them to other pets is best done after a few days of settling in.

Take things slow, introduce them gradually, and always supervise. If you're unsure, ask Cadela Carlota or a trusted dog trainer for advice!

## **Chewing**

Chewing helps dogs process emotions and can calm them down. Sadly, that can also mean they might chew your favourite shoes!

It's important not to raise your voice at them, as frustrating as this may be.

Instead, gently take the inappropriate item away with a firm "no" and replace it with something they're allowed to chew. Your dog needs to learn what's okay to chew, not that chewing itself is wrong.

That way, your shoes will soon be safe again!

## **Whining and Crying**

It's heartbreaking: your new dog is confused and uncertain, and they cry.

It pulls at your heartstrings! The settling-in phase is tough for everyone, but rest assured, your dog is okay!

They have a comfy bed, warmth, safety, and peace. You're giving them a better life – and they'll soon understand that. The crying will naturally stop as they get more settled and secure in their new home.

## **Barking**

Barking can be a problem, especially in flats, and it can add stress during the settling-in period.

The good news is, barking can be trained out just like other unwanted behaviours. Choose a command like "*Quiet*" or "*Hush*" and use it in a calm tone.

Reward your dog as soon as they stop barking. Repetition and consistent training are the keys here. If it persists, your dog trainer can offer more support

## **In General:**

Everything can be taught – your dog isn't "set in stone"!

Be patient with your new friend and with yourself. If you need help, a dog trainer can guide you in replacing unwanted behaviours with better habits.

Think of it like starting a new job:

You've chosen your ideal candidate, now they need to be trained. They need to learn what's expected of them, and what they should avoid. And just like starting any new job, we all appreciate a boss who communicates patiently, sets clear rules, and rewards successes.

Be that boss – your rescue dog will thank you! 😊

Cadela Carlota recommends working with dog trainer Gail Skinner, in the Algarve.

For any questions about training your new family member, feel free to reach out to:

Gail Skinner - Awesome Dogs Training School

WhatsApp: +351 917 758 404

E-mail: [keyawsomedogs@gmail.com](mailto:keyawsomedogs@gmail.com)