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Love Has No Age Limit
Welcoming an Adopted Dog into Your Home

PMC

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------|
| INTRODUCTION | Pg 3 |
| PREPARATION | Pg 5 |
| COMING HOME: THE FIRST DAY | Pg 11 |
| SETTLING IN: ESTABLISHING DAILY ROUTINES | Pg 23 |
| GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER | Pg 31 |
| VETERINARY CARE..... | Pg 39 |
| TRAINING..... | Pg 43 |
| BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS 101..... | Pg 55 |
| Separation Anxiety..... | Pg 58 |
| Trouble Shooting for House Training..... | Pg 62 |
| Chewing..... | Pg 64 |
| Resource Guarding..... | Pg 66 |
| I Don't Like to be Touched! | Pg 68 |
| The Fear of Strangers..... | Pg 69 |
| Behavior Problems Between Dogs in the House | Pg 73 |
| Reactivity to Unfamiliar Dogs | Pg 76 |
| Fearful Dogs: Life Can Be Scary | Pg 77 |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | Pg 84 |
| RESOURCES | Pg 85 |



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INTRODUCTION

Bugsy was in trouble when Karen first met him. Half Black Lab and half handsome stranger, he was a 60-pound, two-and-half year old who sometimes sat on cue but had no other training. More problematically, he barked at visitors, lunged at other dogs when on leash, chased cars, and would sometimes take off if he got loose outside. After Karen adopted him, patience and consistent training allowed him to progress so much that he became her demo dog in training classes, assisted her in treating dogs who were reactive to other dogs and took long, off-leash walks in the country.

Bo Peep was going to be put down. A young Great Pyrenees, she was born with structural problems and couldn't stand up on her hind legs. She dragged herself forward by her forelegs, pushing the straw on the barn floor behind her like a seal through water. That's when Patricia took her in, wondering what in the world she was thinking. One year and three surgeries later, Bo Peep was a healthy and happy sweetheart of a dog who was loved by people, other dogs and the sheep she gently guarded for the next nine years.

Most stories about the adoption of adolescent or adult dogs aren't quite that dramatic, but still, there is something very special about bringing an older dog into your home. Puppies come with little experience behind them, acting like furry, little sponges who are primed to soak up knowledge. They attach themselves to any one who will feed them and rub their bellies, and then follow them everywhere. Older dogs ("older" as in "not-a-puppy-anymore") are

different in some ways; they arrive with a history behind them, having learned what to expect from life as they matured. They may come ready to bond with you the moment they enter your house, or they may need a little time to get to know you. They may come with good habits or bad ones. Some dogs will come and ease themselves into your life within twenty-four hours, while others, like Buggy and Bo Peep, may require a lot more time, knowledge and patience.

Adopting a dog who needs a new home is a wonderful thing, but right now there isn't much written about bringing home a mature dog, and how to forge a relationship with something other than a puppy. We want to help you start this adventure off on the right paw, walking side-by-side with a dog we hope will soon become one of your best friends.

We know there are many questions that arise when you welcome a new dog into your home. (We've often asked ourselves these questions, including, "Oh, dear, what have I gotten myself into?"), but we also suspect that you might be too busy to read a lengthy book. *Love Has No Age Limit* covers the most common and important issues that you might encounter, based on our own experiences and input from other trainers and behaviorists as well as shelter and rescue experts. We can't both keep it concise and provide detailed explanations of every question that might arise, but included is what you most need to know during the first month after you adopt a new dog. At the end of the booklet we've added a list of resources if you need more information on a specific issue.

When you get a new dog, it's natural to want to know everything at once, but don't worry about reading this booklet straight through. If you don't have your dog yet, we recommend reading the Preparation section first. If you are standing in the living room with your new dog thinking "Now what?," your first stop should be the Coming Home and Settling In sections. Otherwise, go to the section that you need right now and read the rest when you get a chance. Most of all, please accept best wishes and crossed paws from us, and the spirits of our own rescued dogs, for a wonderful life with the newest member of your family.