# Transitioning from Our Campus to Your Home

## Settling In

Most GDB alumni report that it takes about six months before feeling really settled at home with their new dog. The key to the partnership will be based on how you interact as life companions. Providing consistent structure and boundaries will aid in the transition and help maintain your dog’s positive house behavior. And of course, GDB will continue to be a resource to you after receiving your K9 Buddy. We want to take time now to cover some topics related to settling in at home with your K9 Buddy dog.

## Consistency

Being steady in your actions and expectations creates a sense of predictability that is good for your dog’s emotional wellbeing. This applies to both the handling of your dog as well as the schedule you keep. For example, after you give a verbal cue to your dog, be attentive that your dog responds properly. Your dog will quickly notice when you are not attentive and may take advantage of your inattentiveness. Further, in your home, the schedule may differ from the one they have previously followed. Though dogs are adaptable, they do enjoy their routines. Plan to keep a steady routine with your new K9 Buddy dog, particularly when it comes to feeding and relieving. If you like, we can review your intended routine together as you prepare for your partnership.

It is very important that everyone in the household is consistent with house rules.For example, your Buddy dog has not been allowed on furniture in their puppy raising home. You need to decide what the furniture rules will be with your buddy dog in your house. If you choose to continue the “no furniture” rule, everyone in the house needs to be consistent with this. Alternatively, you can allow the Buddy dog free access to furniture, or only allow them on the furniture when given an invitation (which you will need to teach them). The important part is that everyone is consistent with expectations, otherwise you will be frustrated and your dog will be confused. Other common areas that require consistency include: waiting at the door before being released to go through, sitting for their food bowl, expectations while people are eating, and expectations when visitors enter the house. You may have additional rules for your Buddy dog, and consistency is key as your new dog is settling in and learning the rules of your house.

## Establish a New Home for Your Dog

In order to give your dog a chance to feel securely settled, it is best to plan to be primarily home after receiving your new K9 Buddy. This provides your dog the opportunity to become familiar with this new place - its layout, its smells, what makes it special. After an initial adjustment period, your dog will know they have a permanent place to call “home”. When your dog understands this, you can feel free to travel together knowing you both have a strong sense of home-base.

## Family and Friends

It is normal for your dog to be the center of attention when you first get home. Family, friends, and neighbors will want to focus on your new partner. It is ideal if you have already prepared your friends and family before your dog arrives. Most important is to prepareyourself to educate anyone in your life that does not understand the relationship between you and your dog. Without a doubt, your dog will soon find themselves an integral part of the family. Each family member will have a unique connection with your dog. Make it clear to your family and friends that the goal of a K9 Buddy is to be your companion. While your dog will certainly enjoy interacting with your personal community, it is important to emphasize that a special bond must be built between the K9 Buddy team. Explain that if they pay too much attention to your dog early on, it could hinder the ability for this bond to develop.

If you are unable to tend to your dog’s needs, it is perfectly acceptable for friends and family to care for your dog. Anyone caring for your dog, however, should be able to physically handle your dog and use proper leash handling.

## Other Pets

Many K9 Buddy clients and families have pets in their home. To help them get off on the right foot, introduce your current pet dog to your new K9 Buddy dog by having both dogs sniff each other while on leash. If possible, this introduction should occur on neutral ground to avoid your pet dog from getting territorial. Doing a short parallel walk with both dogs, having someone else walking your pet dog, is a great strategy. If this is difficult to accomplish, place the pet dog in a room and close the door before bringing the K9 Buddy into the house. Let the two dogs sniff under the door to evaluate your pet dog’s response. Any aggressive behavior from either dog should be firmly discouraged. Even if your K9 Buddy dog and pet dog seem to get along very well initially, it takes time for their relationship to be fully established. Continue to monitor their interactions for several weeks, especially since your K9 Buddy will be confined on leash or on tie down during this time. Your pet dog should not be allowed to approach or taunt your K9 Buddy at will. In the unlikely event that your pet dog does not accept your K9 Buddy dog in the home despite ample time and monitoring, please contact GDB for further assistance.

For cats and pets in cages, if you follow the tie down and leash guidelines for your dog, these pets will have an opportunity to get accustomed to your K9 Buddy’s presence at a distance that is comfortable for them.

## Eating Habits and Settling Behavior

Because of the change in home-base and routine, your dog may appear restless or show a loss of appetite when they first come home. Give your dog plenty of affection and companionship and establish a regular routine. Continue to offer your dog their regular meals twice a day. If they don’t eat within 10 minutes, remove the food and don't offer any more until their next regularly scheduled meal. Hand-feeding or giving your dog constant access to their food will teach them to have an inconsistent or picky appetite.

When in a new place, some dogs may have a hard time settling and will try to interact with you in the middle of the night. To teach your dog to lie quietly and patiently in the crate or on tie down, say a firm “quiet” or “no.” If they whine or paw at you, then ignore your dog. If your dog makes unsuccessful attempts to rouse you, they will soon lose interest and settle in for the night. Take note that when a dog whines excessively, pants and seems uneasy, they may genuinely need to relieve. If so, you can expect them to empty almost immediately when you bring them outside. If however, they do not go right away and just sniff around or try to play with you, return your dog promptly to their tie down or crate and ignore them if they attempt the behavior again.

## Relieving

A relieving schedule with “enough” opportunities for your dog to relieve means your dog is less likely have accidents in the home or in public. Know your dog’s individual needs and design a relieving schedule around them.

Where and how you relieve your dog at home influences what your dog will do away from home. If you have a fenced yard, think carefully about allowing your dog to relieve off leash at home. If they show any interest in eating their own feces, getting into or ingesting things that they shouldn’t while in your yard, consider relieving your dog on leash until they are proven trustworthy in your yard.As always, be a responsible handler and pick up after your dog when out in public. Dogs tend to relieve more readily on natural surfaces. If you plan to travel frequently with your K9 Buddy dog and may need to relieve your dog on concrete in some locations, it is best to do the same at home. Otherwise, you may have a dog “holding it” until they can get home.

## Watering

If you have water always available to your dog, it is important to clean the water bowl daily and replenish it with fresh water. If your dog starts having relieving problems with free access to water, change to a specific watering schedule to monitor your dog's water intake.

## Growling or Barking

Your K9 Buddy dog is not a protection dog nor guard dog. GDB breeds for loving temperaments and avoids selecting for protective or aggressive temperaments from our breeding stock. We avoid dogs in GDB programs who indulge in barking, growling or related negative behavior. At home, you may notice your dog letting out a quick bark when new people or dogs come into or near your home. The vocalization can represent the dog announcing that a stranger has entered their territory, however barking and growling should be confronted and discouraged. If you do nothing when your dog growls or barks, you are telling your dog that you approve of that behavior. A couple of barks when someone knocks at your door are fairly insignificant, but you should tell your dog “quiet” if they continue to bark. Ignoring it could lead to other problems. If your dog has any history of this minor “alert barking” behavior, it will be discussed with you during the matching process. As time goes on and once your dog becomes more familiar and settled in the environment, they will feel more comfortable at home and the behavior will likely decrease.

## Places to Relax

Using tie downs or crates is a good method for managing your dog’s activity. While you provide your dog a comfortable place to rest, they are safeguarded from temptations and circumstances that could get them into trouble.

### Tie downs

At GDB, we frequently use tie downs when we want a dog nearby but cannot give undivided attention to monitoring them. We encourage you to continue using tie downs at home to help manage your dog while you are busy with something else. Teaching your dog to settle on tie down is also handy for when you leave the area temporarily. You want your dog to feel confident that you will return if they stay calm and well behaved. Tie downs are convenient, but your dog may attempt to chew anything within reach. Check to make sure there are no tempting items nearby when you leave them alone. Also be sure that your dog is wearing just their quick-release flat collar when put on tie-down. Some dogs are prone to lean quite hard against the tie down and others occasionally tangle themselves in the cable. They usually step out of a snarl themselves, but if you need to get involved, you will find it easiest to detach the tie down from the anchor before untangling your dog. A tie down can also be helpful for general environment management such as to keep the dog out of the kitchen when cooking or to prevent excitable greetings when people come in the front door. It is also a great way for the dog to be close to activity in the household while being settled and safe.

### Crates

A crate acts as the dog's private home or den. Dogs actually enjoy being in their own "place" and are quite comfortable in a crate for up to approximately 4 hours during the day. Knowing that your dog is relaxing in a crate, you can leave the house for a while and be confident that destructive habits won't develop in your absence. At night, your dog can sleep in their crate for approximately8 to 10 hours. Another advantage of a crate is that the dog has more freedom of movement and is effectively separated from any off-limit items. Ensure that your dog has been properly exercised and watered and given an opportunity to relieve prior to being crated for any period of time. Please monitor your dog with bedding in the crate initially, before leaving them unattended with bedding.

### Beds

At night, most dogs like sleeping in the same room as their partner. Initially, your dog should spend the night on tie down or in a crate. With a consistent schedule and close supervision, you might notice that your dog puts themselves in their crate or lies down on their bed before you’ve taken the leash off or had a chance to connect the tie down to their collar. This is an indication that they are comfortable with the routine. These are the types of signs you want to consistently see at home before giving your dog freedom at nighttime. After your dog becomes accustomed to your house and their sleeping area, it may not be necessary to restrict your dog to a tie down or closed crate overnight.

## Pattern Good Behavior

An ounce of prevention really is worth a pound of cure! While it is tempting to quickly give your dog full freedom in your home, you first need to convey your expectations. The most successful way to avoid inappropriate house behavior or relieving problems is to pattern good behavior in your dog from the start. Remember that your Buddy dog was raised with daily management from their puppy raiser to help them succeed. They are familiar with crates, tie-downs, draglines, and baby-gates as tools to guide them towards appropriate house behavior.

Some people find it useful to think of the rule of threes:

First 3 days:

This is a time of change for your new dog, and for you and your family as well. It is a new environment for the dog and some dogs may find it difficult to settle while acclimating into their new home. Other dogs may be more subdued or withdrawn for the first few days. Both of these are normal reactions. The Buddy dog should be kept on leash with you, or on a tie-down in the same room as a person for a minimum of 3 days. Always use a crate when the dog is not directly supervised.

Some Buddy dogs are coming from a kennel environment on GDB’s campus and need to re-establish a relieving routine. Take the dog outside to relieve on leash every couple of hours until a relieving schedule is established. In the puppy raising home, your dog was used to being taken out on a regular schedule, so will likely not “ask” to go outside. This will come with time, as your dog learns the routine and you learn their signals. In the meantime, take them out every few hours instead of waiting for them to “ask”.

By keeping hold of the leash as you move through the house with your new dog, you are able to prevent inappropriate behaviors such as: picking up inappropriate items (anything that is not a dog toy), sniffing counters or trash cans, eating food or crumbs on the floor, jumping on furniture, rushing through doors, or pestering other household pets. This allows a new dog to acclimate to your home and prevent them from practicing inappropriate behavior. Use the leash to prevent or interrupt any attempts at undesirable behavior.

First 3 weeks:

As your dog starts to settle in and show good house behavior and a consistent relieving schedule, introduce freedom gradually**.** Start by allowing your dog to drag their leash around at quiet times, such as following a walk or exercise session when your dog may potentially be calmer. You may use the nylon leash we provide with your equipment. When your dog walks around to examine their surroundings more closely, follow them. If your dog is investigating without disturbing anything, praise them. If they decide to do anything inappropriate, let them know verbally that you disapprove. If you need to reinforce your verbal correction with the leash, such as pulling the dog away from a counter that they’ve put their paws on, simply pick up the loop handle and do so. If you’ve done your “homework” of patterning your dog, they will likely become disinterested in exploring further and settle down in a familiar spot to chew their toy or rest. The leash can also be used to enforce basic obedience cues (come, sit, wait, etc). Keep the dog on a drag leash until they are consistently responding to basic obedience. When your dog is consistently responding to your basic obedience cues and showing appropriate house manners without you needing to utilize the drag leash, you can remove the drag leash.

One thing to keep in mind: When you put your dog back on leash, regardless of whether their previous behavior was desirable or not, remember to praise them as you touch the collar. If your dog interprets your grasping of their collar as a correction, it may create negative “keep away” behavior. Offer food rewards periodically to emphasize that returning to you is always positive.

First 3 months:

As time progresses, keep in mind that these early months are all about patience, consistency, and repetition. Tools that can assist with positive house manners and settling behaviors include crate, tie-down, dragline and baby-gates. By limiting freedoms initially, these tools help reduce stress and can help your dog settle more easily. Please remember; you are new, your house is new, and your neighborhood is new. Your Buddy dog will feel more comfortable with known boundaries and structure.

## Your Young Dog

Your dog will act like a puppy sometimes. Even though they may often seem ‘adult’ or ‘grown up’, they are not yet fully mature. These adolescent dogs are still developing behavior patterns that they will take with them for the rest of their lives. As we have discussed, preparation and prevention are much easier than curing habitual problems. Starting off on the right foot and investing the necessary time early on will help you immensely down the line. The more consistent and rewarding you are as a handler, the more motivated your dog will be to connect with you and the stronger your relationship will grow. This type of relationship does not happen overnight or by chance. It is up to you to maintain your dog’s training as well as consistently remind your dog what your expectations are regarding their behavior in the home and elsewhere. The time and energy you spend now will pay off later on as your dog will have excellent house behavior, obedience responses, and focus.