

# Sorting Fact from Fiction: Dog Rescue Advice That's Best Left at the Curb

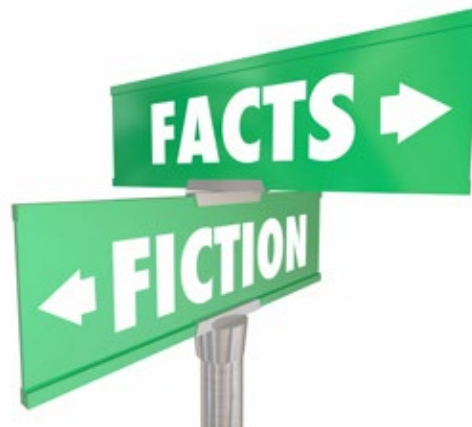
When adopting or fostering a dog from a rescue, a new guardian will usually be instructed on specific strategies to introduce the new dog to the household. Sometimes the advice is sound and logical, but some rescues unfortunately provide outdated or simply false information.

Despite their good intentions and having the dog's best interests at heart, this advice can harm the dog, damage the owner's relationship with the dog, and even result in the pet being returned to the rescue.

The common instructions for new adopters and fosters outlined here may seem logical and helpful at first glance, but a deeper examination shows that they simply don't work – and reveals what you should do instead as your new companion settles into your home.

## ***“Establish dominance over your new dog by...”***

Many rescues subscribe to the outdated “dominance theory,” and adopters and fosters may be told to “establish dominance” by



- never letting the dog on the furniture;
- not talking to, touching, or looking at the dog;
- eating before the dog can eat;
- going through doorways first;
- not allowing the dog to sniff;
- alpha rolling the dog (holding them down to the floor, often by the neck).

Treating their dog this way can set adopters up for a very poor relationship with what should be their new companion! Dogs need clarity and structure, but that does not mean

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## **JULY 2020**

### **THE OFFICIAL SPEAKING OF DOGS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

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#### **About Speaking of Dogs**

Speaking of Dogs is a Toronto-based organization that launched in 2001 and is dedicated to educating and enlightening people about dogs through seminars, workshop forums, outreach and rescue. Our goal is to end cruelty, abandonment, mistreatment and homelessness of man's best friend.

*Speaking of Dogs Rescue is the operating name of Speaking of Dogs Rescue Program, a Canada Revenue Agency—registered charity based in Ontario.*

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#### **Newsletters**

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# Dogs Looking for Homes

## A friend in need is a friend indeed

Without a doubt, a dog is a real friend. Our dogs come in all shapes and sizes, but they have one thing in common—they all need loving forever homes. Open your heart and your home to a rescue dog. You'll be glad you did. For complete information about the adoption process, please visit [www.speakingofdogs.com/adoption-process](http://www.speakingofdogs.com/adoption-process). For more information on each dog, simply click on their name.

## Rocket

SHEPHERD / GREAT DANE MIX  
LARGE, ADULT, MALE

### FEATURED DOG:

Rocket is a 7-year-old German Shepherd and Dane mix who weighs about 75 pounds. This big boy is very sweet, sensitive, and laid back, and he loves nothing more than to hang with his people.

Rocket adores his walks but is reactive when he sees other dogs, especially larger dogs, so he will need space, desensitization, and counter-conditioning work. A no-pull harness would be helpful because he is quite strong, which is very obvious when he pulls toward other dogs!

He is totally disinterested in squirrels and chipmunks that run by, so he may be okay with cats or other small animals in the home. He has yet to be tested with children.

While Rocket does bark at large dogs on walks, he is not very vocal and is quiet at home. He also travels well in the car. He has some anxiety when initially left alone and may pee on the floor, but this does not happen every time. A home where he won't be left alone all day would be ideal for him.

Rocket has been fully vetted and has an ongoing dry eye issue that will

need daily drops, a lubricant, and the occasional checkup. He doesn't like the drops but accepts them like a champ!

Rocket is a patient, easy-going guy and asks for very little beyond some pats and scratches. He is quite happy to just while away the afternoon sitting outside with his person. All Rocket needs now is a forever home – and his forever person. Could you be Rocket's perfect match?





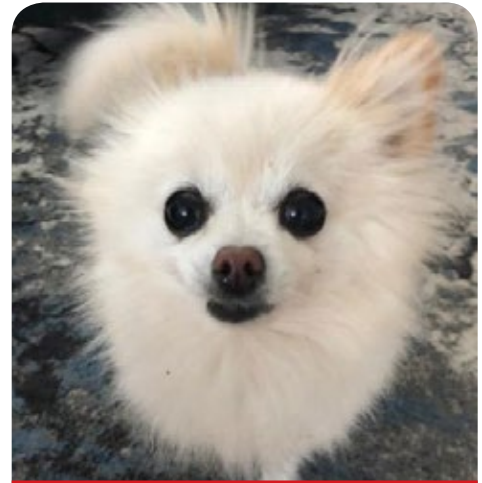
*Tucker*

LABRADOR RETRIEVER  
LARGE, ADULT, MALE



*Mocha*

PUG / SHIH TZU MIX  
SMALL, YOUNG, MALE



*Hero*

POMERANIAN  
SMALL, ADULT, FEMALE



*Jett and Twylight*

PUG / SHIH TZU MIX  
SMALL, BABY, MALE & FEMALE



*Belle*

BORDER COLLIE MIX  
MEDIUM, SENIOR, FEMALE



*Roy*

BORDER COLLIE MIX  
LARGE, SENIOR, MALE



*Copper*

PUG / BEAGLE MIX  
MEDIUM, ADULT, MALE



*Mollie*

PUG / SHIH TZU  
SMALL, ADULT, FEMALE



*Lily*

CHIHUAHUA / PUG MIX  
SMALL, ADULT, FEMALE

# Ask the Trainer

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depriving them of a relationship, inflicting physical punishment, or subjecting them to strange rituals that go unnoticed by, or may even confuse, them (like eating before them or insisting on going through every doorway first).

In many cases these strategies simply prevent adopters from enjoying their new pet, confuse the dog, and in more severe cases – particularly if physical punishment or fear tactics are used – the dog may retaliate or bite in self-defence, or anxiety may emerge or worsen.

**What to do instead:** Giving your new dog structure and clarity doesn't mean being sharp or unyielding. It means consistently preventing opportunities for them to engage in undesirable behaviours and providing lots of positive feedback when they engage in activities you like. Give your new dog the love and attention they seek, taking your cues from them, and discuss a positive-reinforcement training plan with an accredited trainer.

## ***“Nothing in Life Is Free!” (or NILIF)***

NILIF means “nothing in life is free,” and typically this includes affection, comfortable sleeping spots, food, toys – all of your dog's basic wants and needs. Fosters and adopters are advised that all contact and objects should be kept out of the dog's reach until they do something to “earn” them, usually sitting. This is often a “dominance-lite” strategy, catering to old ideas of leadership or dominance.

Sitting to request access to activities or food is not a problem in and of itself, and it can actually be a fantastic thing to teach a pet dog! However, NILIF takes it a step further so that the dog may not



even have the “right” to drink water without sitting first.

While “sitting to say please” has many uses, the extent that NILIF takes it is unnecessary and an unhelpful use of an owner's limited training time and effort. What's more, a dog will often learn to do an undesirable behaviour in order to be asked to do the desirable behaviour. Many dogs have learned to jump up then sit in order to get their owner's attention!

If you'd like to know more about the drawbacks of NILIF, check out *Plenty in Life is Free* by Kathy Sdao (Dogwise Publishing, 2012).

**What to do instead:** Focusing on guidance and reinforcement is a far more beneficial place for a new adopter's efforts.

## ***“Use only a choke chain or martingale collar”***

Martingale collars have a very important place in rescue. These “limited-slip”

collars can be adjusted to tighten but not continuously. A dog will find it difficult to back out of the collar if they are panicked, but it will not fully choke them, as a choke chain does.

However, many rescues take this to the extreme, instructing their adopters that the only equipment they should use on the dog for walks is a martingale. For routine walks with a dog who pulls on leash, a front-attaching, no-pull harness is a fantastic option!

Choke chains, prong collars, pinch collars, and similar punishment-based equipment are unnecessary and potentially dangerous, and these should simply never be used with any dog.

**What to do instead:** A dog may be walked on a no-pull harness with a safety clip up to the martingale, in case they pull out of the harness. Another option is to walk with a double leash, one to the martingale for extra safety and one to the harness to help limit pulling.

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# Ask the Trainer

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## ***“Let the dogs work it out!”***

This is certainly a risky piece of advice, but it is nonetheless often given to adopters who already have a dog in the home. However, dogs who are left to “work it out” often end up with far bigger relationship problems than those who are integrated more carefully. First impressions matter!

**What to do instead:** In most cases, it’s a good idea to start off by keeping the dogs separated unless you can directly supervise them (i.e., any time you are not home, awake, and can drop whatever you’re doing) and removing all obvious resources, like food and toys, from the area.

There are many variables for individual dogs, but it is generally best to introduce your dogs in an enclosed outdoor area or on a walk before entering the home. It may be helpful for the new dog to enter first and be accompanied on a tour of the home so they can sniff out all the new smells and spaces before having to navigate the home with the resident dog. Be aware that small spaces, such as hallways and the space between the coffee table and couch, can be common locations for conflict between dogs.

It’s critical for an owner to be a support and referee for the dogs as they get to know each other and learn to share their space. Don’t allow your dogs into each other’s space when resting or in possession of a valued item, and don’t be afraid to use gates to give each dog their own space for the first few days or if one dog needs a break!

Look for warning signs like hard staring, visually tracking the other dog, pushing the other dog out of the space, or any tense body language. Little things can lead to big problems! If you’re unsure how to proceed with introductions, consult a qualified trainer. You can also review past trainer columns, particularly [“Introducing New Pets to Resident Pets”](#) (May 2017) and [“Managing a Multi-dog Household”](#) (October 2017).

## ***“Never crate or confine your dog”***

There are many dogs out there who don’t take easily to crating, and there are homes that don’t see the need for it. As such, crating may not be essential for everyone.

However, crating is an incredibly helpful skill for your dog to learn. It is particularly useful when travelling to visit family who may be allergic or unwelcoming, when your dog goes to the vet and is crated before treatment, when you are in hotel rooms that require dogs be in crates, or while your dog is being transported in a car or plane.

The advice to never crate or confine can be very limiting for a dog and owner, and if undertaken with care, crating is a skill most dogs can learn to do happily.

**What to do instead:** Treat crating like any other skill and teach it to your dog in incremental steps, thereby helping them create a happy, calm association with this type of confinement.

## ***“Do not start training for X number of weeks”***

Training essentially means structured and purposeful learning, and learning is something your dog does every day! If learning is a fact of daily life, why

not use that to your and your dog’s benefit?

Training in the form of being clear and consistent with your new pet needs to start on day one. That doesn’t mean being strict or unyielding with your new dog, but it does mean ensuring that you have a clear idea of what behaviour you want, reinforcing what you like, and preventing behaviours you don’t like.

**What to do instead:** The nugget of truth in this advice is that group training classes may need to wait for some dogs, particularly if you are dealing with reactivity, fear, aggression, or difficulty settling in. In cases such as these, it may be helpful to seek private or virtual lessons to help keep training on track. This way you can prevent or resolve problems without exposing your dog to a group class when it is more than they can manage or one that isn’t focused on your dog’s specific issues.

## ***The best advice?***

Always look for reputable rescues and accredited trainers who only recommend and use positive, reward-based methods. We adopt and foster dogs to enrich our lives – it’s up to us to ensure we enrich their lives as well.



**Emily Fisher**, CPDT-KA, CDBC, Scratch and Sniff Canine Services, Guelph, ON

# Bits & Bites

Simply click on a summary to be whisked away to the internet page where you can read the full story.

[The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is investigating after a flight from Ukraine landed in Toronto with about 500 young puppies crammed on board, including dozens who were dead or dying.](#)

[Heading out with your pet? The Toronto Humane Society has some excellent tips for keeping things fun and safe for your pet this summer.](#)

[Can dogs detect COVID-19? U.K. researchers are studying whether dogs can “sniff out” the deadly virus and be used to screen people and help control the spread of the disease.](#)

[Heatstroke is a life-threatening emergency that can happen very quickly. Know the 12 signs your dog is becoming overheated.](#)

[With things starting to open back up and people out and about again, you may be more concerned about losing your pet than you’ve been for the past few months. There are many high-tech options out there, including important tools like microchips, but a good ID tag is still essential. Find out how to make your pet’s ID tag as useful and helpful as possible.](#)

[Check out Mercola Healthy Pets’ tips for keeping your pets safe around your medications.](#)



**THIS MONTH'S RECALLS:**

Click on a recall to be directed to further information online.

- Carnivora frozen patties for dogs and cats

**To: Speaking of Dogs Rescue**  
**From: Victoria and family**  
**Subject: Gizmo**

Dear Speaking of Dogs Rescue,

Hi there! Almost three years ago we adopted Gizmo from you guys. He has been the light of our lives! I just wanted to reach out and give a huge thank you for all that you do. Thank you so much for giving us the best gift ever.

Gizmo loves visiting the seniors at the long-term care home I work at, long walks, loves going to the vet, and going for car rides.

Thank you x a million for bringing this amazing dog into our lives!



## YOUR PUP OUGHT TO BE IN PICTURES!

Have a great photo of your furry best bud you'd like to share? We'd love to include it in the 2021 Speaking of Dogs Rescue calendar!

It could be a photo of your pup making the most of spring showers, fun in the sun, quiet time during the

quarantine, or any other shot that makes you smile. Ideal photos don't include people but can include a four-legged friend.

Photos should be 300 dots per inch (DPI) and at least 5 inches by 7 inches in size. Photos can be colour or black and white.

Please email your favourite snapshots to [lorraine@speakingofdogs.com](mailto:lorraine@speakingofdogs.com).

# Happy Tails

## JUNE ADOPTIONS:

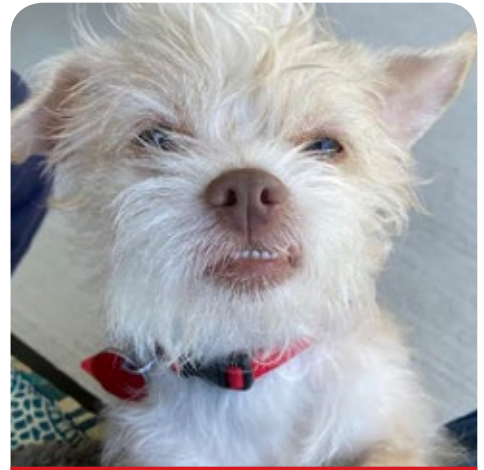
A big thank you to our foster parents and our new adoptive guardians for helping give these loving dogs a second chance.



*Benny*



*Cheeto*



*Dylan*



*Emerald*



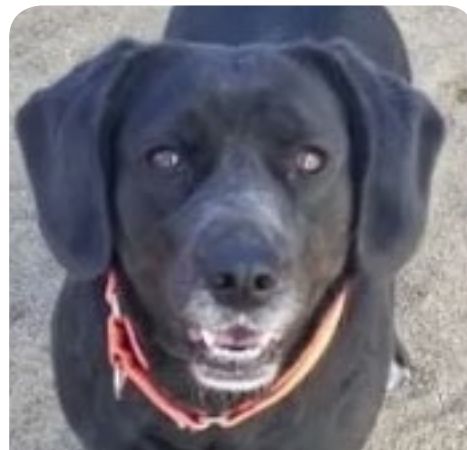
*Herbert*



*Honeybun & Rascal*



*Jamilla*



*Luna*

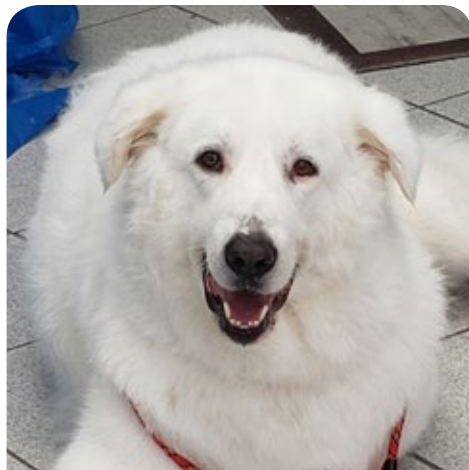


*Max*

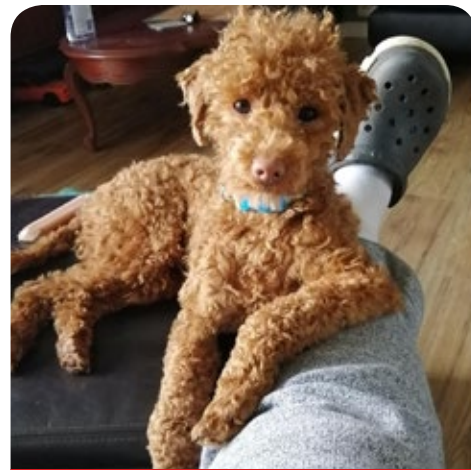
# More Happy Tails



Maya



Whiskey



Kody

## Don't Miss Our Fabulous FACEBOOK AUCTIONS!

Looking for a fun distraction while you're waiting for your favourite spots to open back up? Spending more time on social media than usual? Head on over to Speaking of Dogs Rescue's Facebook page! Not only do we have lots of info about the amazing dogs we're helping, every week we're auctioning off a different item – all for the dogs! Check our [Facebook page](#) regularly to see what's on the block and to place your bids!

## STAY SAFE AND SUPPORT SPEAKING OF DOGS!

Thanks to our wonderfully talented volunteer Katherine, Speaking of Dogs Rescue has washable and reusable fabric masks to keep you safe and stylish this summer.

The masks are made with 100% cotton fabric and ¼-inch elastic, which is a continuous loop through the sides. One end of the elastic sits on the neck, near the hairline, and the other end sits near the crown of the head. A large portion of the face is covered, but there is no metal piece at the bridge of the nose. Please note these are not medical-grade masks.

Each mask is only \$20, and shipping is included. All funds raised will go directly to helping the many dogs in our care. To order, please email Kim at [kim@speakingofdogs.com](mailto:kim@speakingofdogs.com).





# Wags & Wiggles

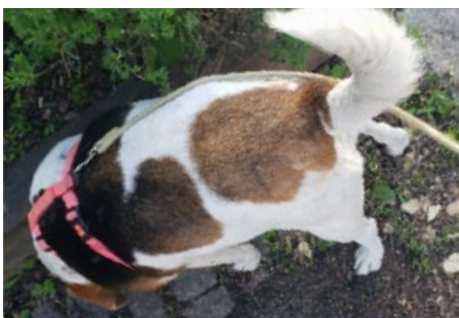
## STEP UP FOR THE PUPS

Very enthusiastic wags and wiggles for all the walkers, runners, volunteers, and sponsors who made our Step Up for the Pups independent walkathon a great success! We were able to raise much-needed funds to help the many dogs in our care, including our wonderful Forever in Foster dogs.

### And the winners were...

- Most steps / greatest distance travelled: Cathy Vandergeest and Miley
- Best social media engagement: Christine Hui and Biscuit

Congratulations to our winners, and thanks again to everyone who helped support Step Up for the Pups!



# In Memoriam



*Stacie aka Abuela*

LOVED BY LESLIE  
ADOPTED JUNE 2019  
PASSED JUNE 2020



*Mr. Jones aka Charlie*

LOVED BY TANYA  
ADOPTED JUNE 2015  
PASSED JUNE 2020



*Morty*

LOVED BY CAS  
ADOPTED JULY 2016  
PASSED JUNE 2020



*Hailey*

LOVED BY KARINA AND FAMILY  
FOREVER IN FOSTER  
PASSED JUNE 2020

# In Memoriam



*Little Bit*  
LOVED BY KAREN AND DEREK  
FOREVER IN FOSTER  
PASSED JUNE 2020



*Shelby aka Kylie*  
LOVED BY CYNTHIA AND FAMILY  
ADOPTED DECEMBER 2017  
PASSED JUNE 2020