



## Ask the trainer

### **The first 30 days: setting up your rescue dog for success**

Bringing home a rescue dog is exciting, emotional and full of hope. You've opened your heart and home to a dog who deserves a fresh start and that's something truly special.

But what many adopters don't realize is this: the first 30 days matter more than almost anything else you'll do together.

This first month isn't about perfect obedience or teaching lots of tricks. It's about helping your dog feel safe, understood and secure in their new world.

At Muttz with Mannerz Canine Training Academy, we often say we are enriching the lives at both ends of the leash. That begins with patience, compassion and realistic expectations — and not pressure or performance.

### **Start with decompression, not demands**



Imagine being moved to a new home with new smells, new people and new rules — one where you don't even understand the language. That's what adoption feels like to a dog.

Even the friendliest dogs need time to decompress. For many, this takes two-to-four weeks or longer. During this period, keep life simple. Limit visitors, skip busy outings, keep walks calm and provide a quiet resting space. Think of these early days as your dog's exhale. You're not asking for performance yet; you're offering safety.

When dogs feel safe, learning happens naturally. When they feel overwhelmed, behaviour problems often show up.

### **Build trust before training**

It's tempting to jump straight into fixing behaviours like pulling on leash, jumping up or ignoring cues. But trust comes before training. Always.

Focus first on connection: hand-feed some meals, reward eye contact, play simple games, speak gently and respect your dog's space. When your dog begins choosing to follow you or check in with you, that's trust growing.

Training sticks far better when your dog feels emotionally secure.

### **Understand the whole dog: the LEGS framework**

Every rescue dog arrives with a history we may never fully know. Behaviour isn't just about obedience or stubbornness. It's shaped by the whole dog.

At Muttz with Mannerz, we often use the LEGS framework developed by behaviour expert Kim Brophy to better understand dogs as individuals.

**L – Learning:** What has this dog experienced before? What habits have they practised?

**E – Environment:** What's happening around them right now that might feel stressful or overwhelming?

**G – Genetics:** What breed traits or instincts influence their behaviour?

**S – Self:** What are their unique personality, sensitivities and emotional needs?

For example, a herding mix may naturally chase movement. A scent hound may follow their nose more than your voice. A dog from a chaotic environment may startle easily or struggle to settle. These aren't bad behaviours. They're information. When we understand why a dog behaves a certain way, we can support them with compassion instead of trying to correct or punish them.

### **Introduce foundations gently**

Once your dog begins settling in usually after the first week or two, you can introduce light structure and foundation skills.

Keep sessions short, positive and fun. Practice name recognition, hand targeting, sit or down, loose leash walking and calm greetings. Aim for success, not perfection. Five minutes here and there is more effective than long, frustrating sessions.



*Photo: jwvein/pixabay via canva.com*

And remember: everyday life is training. Waiting at doors, settling on a mat and walking politely are the real-life skills that matter most.

### **Create predictable routines**

Dogs thrive on consistency. A simple daily rhythm helps them feel safe and lowers anxiety. Meals at similar times, regular walks, rest periods and a predictable bedtime all help create

stability. When dogs know what to expect, they relax. Routine builds confidence faster than anything else.

### **Manage expectations (and be kind to yourself)**

Your rescue dog will not be perfect in 30 days. There may be accidents, chewed shoes or sleepless nights. Adjustment takes time for both of you. Progress isn't linear. It's messy and real.

Celebrate small wins: the first tail wag, the first cuddle, the first time they relax deeply in your home. These moments mean more than flawless obedience ever could.

### **The big picture**

The first 30 days aren't about creating a well-trained dog. They're about creating a secure, trusting relationship. When we lead with patience, understanding, enrichment and science-based positive training, behaviour naturally improves because the dog feels safe enough to learn.

With time, consistency and compassion, you're not just training a dog — you're building a partnership for life.



**Written by**

**Corey McCusker, CPDT-KA, LFDM**

Corey McCusker, CPDT-KA, LFDM, is the founder of [Mutz with Mannerz Canine Training Academy](#) in Stouffville, Ontario. She specializes in enrichment-based daycare, positive-reinforcement training and family dog mediation, helping dogs and their people build lasting, trusting relationships through science-based, welfare-focused methods.



**amazon wish lists**

Want to help our dogs?

Consider making a donation from our Amazon wish list of priority dog supplies.

[Click here to view list](#)

## Dogs looking for homes

Without a doubt, a dog is a real friend. Our dogs come in all shapes and sizes and they all have one thing in common — they all need loving forever homes.

Open your heart and home to a rescue dog. You'll be glad you did.

[Learn more about our adoption process](#)

### Meet April's featured dog – Tala



Meet Tala! She's an eight-month-old Labrador mix who came into rescue from Animal Services on Manitoulin Island.

When Tala first arrived, she was in rough shape — underweight and dealing with worms. Thanks to proper veterinary care, vaccinations, medication and good nutrition, she has made an incredible transformation. Today, she's bright-eyed, bushy-tailed and ready for her next adventure!

Tala has adjusted beautifully to home life. While she has plenty of dog beds to choose from, she prefers curling up on her foster parents' bed. She's a total cuddle bug who loves being close to her people. Expect lots of kisses — she'll even gently paw at you to make sure she gets your full attention for belly rubs! Her joyful personality shines through in her constant happiness and her big, toothy grin. Tala is incredibly trusting and gets along wonderfully with people, dogs and even cats.

She is very treat-motivated and quiet and content when crated. Tala has been left alone for up to 4–5 hours without issue and has recently started enjoying short periods of free time in the home. Aside from knocking over a plant or two, she's been well-behaved, showing no signs of destructiveness, barking or anxiety. She currently benefits from having two large-breed foster siblings who help show her the ropes.

Tala has really come into her own. She's found her voice, built confidence and loves a good nap on the couch. Her training is progressing nicely; she already knows basic commands like sit, down, paw and crate, and she's learning to ring a bell to go outside. She has had very few accidents in the home. On walks, she may get excited at first but quickly settles and walks nicely by your side. She is extremely intelligent, eager to learn and has all the potential to excel in advanced training or even service work.



This girl absolutely loves winter! Snow, ice cubes, chilly air — you name it. She would happily sit outside while it's snowing, just taking it all in. Tala also enjoys walks and is becoming more

comfortable with car rides. As she continues to grow, she is expected to be a medium- to high-energy dog who will thrive with an active lifestyle.



Tala is easy-going when it comes to handling. She's comfortable at the vet, during nail trims and bath time, calmly allowing care without fuss.

While Tala can be placed as the only pet, she would do best in a home where someone is around often. Her ideal family will have experience with dogs and be committed to continuing her training using positive reinforcement and enrichment, helping her build confidence and grow into a well-adjusted companion. She's going to be a big girl with an even bigger heart to match.

Her foster mom says there's something truly special about Tala. She's a once-in-a-lifetime kind of dog. Whoever is lucky enough to adopt her will gain an incredibly loving and devoted companion.

**If you're looking for a joyful, affectionate puppy with a zest for life and a love of adventure, Tala just might be your perfect match.**

**[Complete our adoption application](#)**



**Duffy**  
Husky mix  
Large, Baby, Male



**Maggie**  
Labrador Retriever mix  
Medium, Adult, Female



**Ruby**  
Poodle (Toy)  
Small, Adult, Female



**Ricky**  
Corgi/Hound mix  
Medium, Senior, Male



**Nouka**  
Siberian Husky  
Medium, Senior, Female



**Charlie**  
Beagle  
Medium, Senior, Male



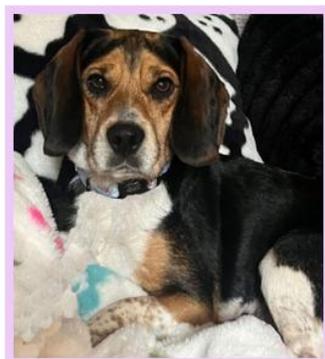
**Nick**  
German Shepherd  
Large, Adult, Male



**Matty**  
Poodle (Toy) mix  
Small, Adult, Male



**Piper**  
Labrador Retriever/Greyhound mix  
Large, Adult, Female

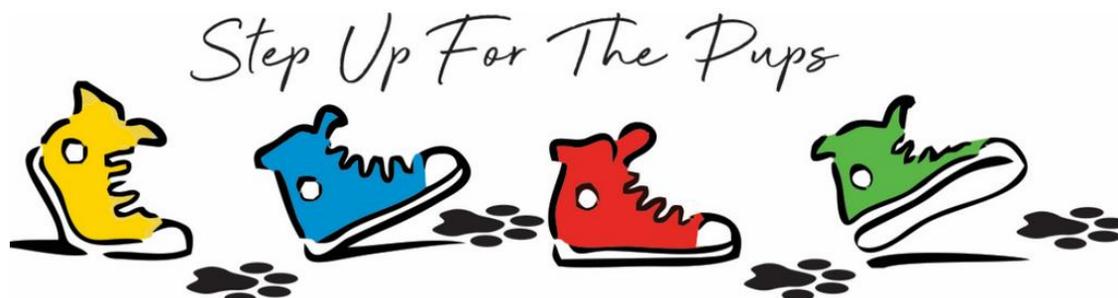


**Holly**  
Beagle  
Medium, Adult, Female



**Sadie**  
Great Pyrenees mix  
Extra Large, Adult, Female

## Step Up for the Pups — Sunday, May 24



Our annual Step Up for the Pups fundraiser walk returns May 24. All money raised goes directly toward medical care for foster dogs — including surgeries, ultrasounds, dental work, diagnostics, medications and other essential procedures. The need remains constant: we receive owner surrender forms daily as families face housing and financial challenges. Shelters remain full and both northern and mill dogs continue to rely on our support.

### How you can help

Stepping up for the Pups is easy. Just set up a fundraising page on the [Canada Helps](#) site by clicking *Create a Fundraiser* and follow the instructions. Then share it far and wide to help raise funds between now and May 24. You can walk wherever you'd like, with or without a dog. Participants can win gift cards for the most money raised and the farthest distance walked. View complete details on our [Step Up for the Pups web page](#).

If you can't take part in the walk itself, you can pledge your support to one of our participants through our special [Canada Helps](#) page which will issue a tax receipt to you immediately. You can also help us expand our reach by sharing our Facebook and Instagram posts.

### Meet some of the pups our rescue has helped



By participating, you'll help dogs like:

- **Louie**, a 10-week-old cocker spaniel pup rescued from a goat farm, critically ill with bacterial infections. After eight days in hospital, he recovered and began his new life.
- **Ricky**, a senior mixed-breed dog whose owner faced homelessness. When we took him in, we discovered he needed an emergency bladder stone surgery.

- **Dream**, a 12-year-old poodle mix awaiting critical fistula repair surgery.
- **Tara**, a young golden retriever whose front leg stopped growing properly and now needs orthopedic surgery to regain normal function.
- **Tutti**, a 12-week-old husky pup found searching for food in northern Manitoba — diagnosed with a malformed ureter requiring costly surgery.

## Why we need your help

Last year, we spent nearly \$225,000 on veterinary expenses — over 90% of our total budget — and we helped nearly 200 dogs on their journey to a better life. That included 57 shelter dogs, 28 puppy mill dogs, 44 owner surrenders, the 19 dogs we supported through Blackie’s Fund, the 10 dogs in urgent need we helped through our Leg Up program and many more. Plus, our ongoing Forever in Foster (FIF) program cared for 35 dogs last year — our highest number ever — providing lifelong medical care, specialized diets and unconditional love in their final years. Just this year, we’ve already taken in over 40 dogs and have 21 dogs in Forever in Foster.

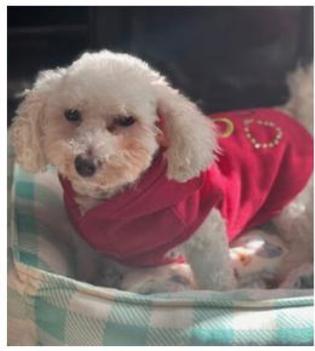
Rising costs of care, food, surgery and medication have made rescue work more challenging than ever. Senior dogs in particular require extensive care: diagnostics, medications, refills, surgeries and follow-ups. Many puppy mill dogs arrive unspayed, unneutered and with advanced dental disease. Increasingly, owner surrenders come from families unable to afford basic veterinary needs.

Please help us replenish our rescue fund so we can continue to make life better, one dog at a time.

Visit our [Canada Helps page](#) and Step Up for the Pups!



## Happy tails (recent adoptions)



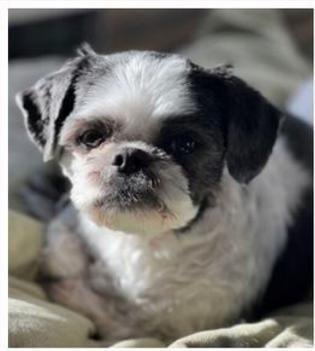
**Bonnie**



**Cheeto**



**Valerie**



**Panda**



**Woody**



**Harley**

## Adoption update

Dear Speaking of Dogs Rescue,

I just wanted to tell you what a blessing Lana has been in our home. We loved her from the moment we met her and that love has only grown. From the beginning, she was sweet and affectionate but oh my! You should see her now as she has found her comfort with us.

Lana loves her daily group walks with other dogs in High Park (I am a dog walker). She charms everyone she meets, leaning in hopeful for a treat. She loves our cats and gets along with every dog she meets. Such a complete sweetheart.

My daughter has given her a nickname — Peanut Butter Muffin Pudding — and it fits! Lana is an epic snuggler, bed hog and sweet baby. She loves car rides and



her neighbourhood sniff walks, and will sometimes bust a move, grinning and romping with the younger pups who live around here. And she loves squirrels!

Rolling over for belly scratches, Lana snorts and grunts and does the cutest paw rub on her muzzle, letting us know we found the right spots. And then that deep sigh and full relax of comfort. It makes us so happy to know she feels safe with us. Sometimes she does this funny howl bark noise if she hears something in the alley, running out to make sure everything is as it should be.

We just adore her, just a big muscle of love. We are so grateful to have her in our lives. Thank you!

Sincerely,  
Anne Cooper

## In memoriam



**Astor (formerly Esther)**

Adopted May 2013  
Loved by Dorothy Kosinski



**Ricky**

Adopted February 2013  
Loved by Peter and Lisa Gazzellone

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### About Speaking of Dogs

Speaking of Dogs Rescue Program is a Canadian registered charity established in the Greater Toronto area with foster homes across Ontario. Launched in 2001, we are a foster-based, all breed rescue with a focus on senior dogs. We are run solely by volunteers with a mission to help homeless dogs in need by providing shelter or sanctuary, necessary medical care, adoption and education.

### Newsletter team

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