



WHAT IS POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT?

The caregivers at Best Friends Animal Society practice positive **reinforcement** with all pets, including foster pets, to help them develop good habits and skills. Positive reinforcement rewards good behavior, **redirects** unwanted behavior and builds a bond of trust between you and your foster pet.

For example, when your foster dog is outside and goes potty and you tell her, “Good job!” in a happy, positive voice, you’re giving positive reinforcement. Giving her a treat when she finishes going potty is another example of positive reinforcement.

An example of redirecting would be moving your foster dog’s attention to a chew toy if she starts chewing on the rug. Another example would be when your dogs or puppies start playing too rough and bite your hand, you turn away or redirect attention to a dog toy.

Introducing your puppies to new people

If people visit your house, introducing your foster dog to them is a great way to help your pup prepare for a new home and become more **confident** in new situations.

- Make the visit short and positive.
- Have no more than one or two people join you in the puppy’s space. Too many people may be too scary and overwhelm them.
- Have the visitors sit quietly and offer treats and gentle pets.
- If the dogs/puppies hide the whole time, that is normal. Just let them get used to the people in their space and then quietly leave. Do not try and pick up the dog or bring her out of her hiding spot. It might take some longer to feel comfortable around strangers.

Introducing your foster dog to new spaces

It is a great idea to introduce your fosters to a new space in your home. Try to think of a time you went somewhere new. When you went to school for the first time, the teacher most likely gave everybody a name tag and a treat because it helped you feel more at ease. Likewise, when you bring your foster puppies to a new room in your house, give them lots of treats and play with them.

Introducing your foster dog to new sounds

Do you remember the first time you heard thunder and saw lightening? It can be scary! Dogs and puppies need to be introduced to different noises so they feel less scared or startled. For example, keep music or the television at a low volume and then gradually increase it to a normal level.

Another example: Run the vacuum in another room with your puppies at a safe distance. If you need to vacuum their space, you might want to take them to a different room until they are more comfortable with the noise.

Remember the dog carrier you used when you brought your dog home? When you are not using the carrier for transportation, leave the carrier (with the door removed or securely propped open) in your foster puppies' room. Put toys, treats and a soft blanket in the carrier to encourage the puppies to go in and spend time there. Learn a little bit about [crate training here](#).

ACTIVITY

[Download our activity sheet on dog enrichment and training.](#)

CREATE

Make a healthy treat and toy in one!

- Grab two sweet potatoes.
- Get a thick rope (or an old leash you can cut) approximately 24 inches long.
- Ask a parent or guardian to slice up the sweet potatoes $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick.
- Use a cookie cutter or the top of a salt shaker to cut a hole through the middle.
- Place sweet potato slices on a cookie sheet.
- Bake at 250 degrees for 45 minutes to an hour.
- Once they cool, string them on the rope.
- Tie the rope.
- Give to your foster dog.

Click to watch the video [quick dog toy](#).

READ

Curl up with your foster dog and read her your favorite book. If your foster dog is shy, try quietly sitting in the room and softly reading your book. It might encourage her to come out and explore. Do you want to read a new book? Check your school or local library for the title below. If you don't have time to stop by the library, have your parent or guardian search the internet and see if you can access the story online.

A Home for Dakota by Jan Zita Grover, illustrated by Nancy Lane

PLAY

Playtime is an important part of a dog's development. Both dogs and puppies need toys to play with so they can get physical exercise and mental stimulation. What is your favorite activity for getting your physical exercise? Do you like to ride your bike? Do you like to play softball or dodgeball?

Riding your bike is a solo activity, which means you can do it by yourself. Dogs and puppies need solo toys to play with when you are not there. Your dogs' solo toys could include Kongs, chew toys, dog puzzles and safe stuffed toys.

Softball and dodgeball are interactive games that you play with other people. Many dogs and puppies love to play fetch and play catch with people and other dogs, which are called **interactive toys**. If you have a foster dog or foster puppies, try interactive games with them. Do they like to chase balls? Do they like to look for toys and treats that you hide? Do they bring the balls you throw back to you?

SHARE

With the permission of your parent or guardian, create a short video of your foster dog or puppies playing with you and share it on social media. If you're unable to use social media, then share it with family, friends and classmates. Be sure to add **#BFFosterCamp** **#BFFamilyFun** hashtags. Remember, you are saving a life. Your foster cat is so grateful and so is Best Friends!

