

Right Hound Right Home™ Greyhound Adoption Cheat Sheet

Coming Home

Sometimes circumstances prevent us from doing all the reading we should or asking all the questions we'd like. I've prepared this handout on essential issues to help you get started until you have time to get and read my book, *Retired Racing Greyhounds for Dummies*. These guidelines apply to the average GH in the average home situation. If you have questions or problems, consult your group, your veterinarian or a Greyhound savvy behavior expert.

On your mark. Get set...Go

Purchase Comfort Zone DAP®. This is plug-in diffuser that replicates a pheromone produced by a momma dog with puppies and therefore has a calming affect on most dogs. You'll need one for each 600 sq feet where your new boy will spend most of his time. It can help prevent separation anxiety and help dogs who have thunderstorm phobias.

If your group doesn't provide them, get a 6-ft leash and a Martingale collar (AKA, Greyhound collar) and learn how to properly fit and hold it before your new boy arrives. Purchase a Premiere® harness for your car to help prevent escapes. The Premiere® harness can be placed and removed without your dog having to lift a leg or step into it.

Get an ID tag made. If your dog has had any training for the track, get a prey call—available at any place that has hunting supplies. Racing GHs have learned to come in response to a similar device. In case he should escape, this can be a cheap insurance policy. Find a place to store it where it will be convenient if you should ever need it. **Do not use it as a toy or allow your children to play with it.**

Buy several Kongs® (at least three—xlg for most avg. females; king for avg/lg males) to use for alone training. The day before your new pal arrives, stuff the Kongs® with kibble soaked in water, a bit of peanut butter, perhaps some meat baby food, or some crushed freeze-dried liver (at any pet store), stick a biscuit (Milk Bone® or similar) in the open end, and freeze them.

Get your crate or safe area set up (a safe area is a confined space in or near where the family spends its time that has been dog proofed, usually defined by a baby gate or other obstacle). Find some big fluffy comforters at a second hand store or buy a nifty soft dog bed—the largest they make. Don't forget stainless steel or crockery food and water dishes.

If your dog is already getting kibble instead of a race track diet, try to find out what kind and stick with that for several months. If you don't know what kind of food he's getting, purchase a high quality kibble like Purina ProPlan, Wellness or Canidae. Both are widely available in independent feed and pet supply stores.

Take time to go through your home and yard at GH eye level to look for anything that might be hazardous. Most landscaping plants are toxic. See <http://www.uexplore.com/health/poisonplants.htm>

Remember that chocolate, onions, and raisins can lead to fatal ailments. Avoid any food or treat that is high in fat.

If possible, arrange to be home for the first four days—especially if he is going to be the only GH in your home.

The first days are the hardest days

Resist the temptation to call in all your neighbors, friends and relatives to show them what followed you home. Your new boy feels like he's just been dropped onto an alien planet. Your actions in these next days could affect his future and your relationship with him.

Keep the pressure off for the first 48 hours. If he's stressed, let him have some quiet time where no one bothers him. Work only on housetraining, alone training, teaching him his name (say his name, toss him or give him a cookie—nothing fancy; bits of kibble are fine) and that being with you is the best thing that ever happened to him (smile at him and gently encourage/praise his approach with your voice and/or give him a cookie).

The classic GH stress pose is called the drippy-nosed statue. He simply stands there like in his head he's trying to find a happy place and nothing else exists. Some other signs he's stressed are; panting, whining, drooling, head down, tail tucked, ears way back against his head.

Greyhounds are not Labrador Retrievers. Don't expect him to be exuberant in his greetings—especially with strangers or in strange places or situations. It's your job to teach him slowly and gently that new places and situations are fun. If you want a Labrador personality, get a Labrador.

Feed him small light meals and avoid any treats that are high in fat. Keep foods simple. Use kibble offered from your hand or tossed if you want to reward him. Don't be surprised if he won't take food from your hand just yet. Many GHs are not accustomed to being hand fed.

Don't be surprised if the stress of being relocated or a sudden change in food causes a bout of diarrhea. Withhold food for 18 hours. Reintroduce him to food with a bland diet and small meals. Talk to your vet's office or your group on how to handle this. Any time you have large groups of dogs together, chances are they will have parasites. If the diarrhea doesn't clear up, assume he has worms and have the vet check him and worm him.

Until you get to know your dog, keep him sleeping in his crate (preferably in your bedroom, next to your bed), or on a bed on the floor in your bedroom. Do not allow him on your bed until you have resolved sleep startle issues. *Sleep startle* is a bark, growl, snap or bite that occurs *only* if the dog is clearly asleep and disturbed. Because GHs have never been disturbed during sleep, many will have some level of this. I work on this as soon as my new dog has had a couple days to settle in. I sit the floor with an awake dog, blanket over my legs and a long pole that has a stuffed sock attached to the end with duct tape—like a broom stick with no broom—next to my leg. I gently nudge him with my fake “foot” as I toss him a really tasty treat. As he learns to like this game I nudge more and more firmly—still tossing treats with each nudge. Later I start the game as he's falling asleep. And lastly I do it when he's been sleeping for awhile. Once I know there is no reaction, I start doing it with my real foot. Sleep startle usually last only a few weeks if you work on it early—and it does not include a serious aggressive display or the dog's teeth on your body. That's a more serious issue that needs professional help.

Oops

Houstraining means your dog learns not to eliminate where he lives. As of now he hasn't learned that where he lives is in your house. It's your job to teach him. If you understand your GH's past, houstraining will be easier. He was probably turned out four times a day—around 7:00 AM, around 11:00 AM, around 3:00PM, and at some time in the evening. Water was available only at turnout. His food was provided around 10:00 AM. Everything went in on schedule so everything came out on schedule. Your new pal is not prepared to be home alone all day without a potty break. Once you return to work arrange to come home at lunch or have a dog sitter take care of his needs. In time, most dogs can learn to “hold it” while you are away at work. Crates are a training tool—not a dog sitter. Use them sparingly (no more than a few hours at a time or overnight

Houstraining is simple— if you follow the rules.

Give him food and water on a regular schedule and remove his food dish after 15-20 minutes. If you work and he'll be alone, remove his water dish about 30 minutes after he finishes eating. Provide water in a water bottle like those used for small animals or fill his dish with ice cubes so he can drink slowly as it melts. Don't use a crate or withhold water if your home is not air conditioned.

Take him to a specific area—don't take him for a walk. As you open the door, say, *Wanna go out*, or something similar. Let him learn that his walk is his reward for eliminating in the right place. Keep him outside for five minutes or so. If he doesn't eliminate, bring him in, confine him and take him out every 20 minutes until he succeeds.

Go out with. If he's reluctant to “go” on leash, use a flexible leash or a long line.

Treat and praise immediately. As soon as he's finished have your rewards and quiet praise ready. Don't wait to get inside—you want him to understand he's being paid for eliminating outside—not coming into the house.

Prevent incidents. If he isn't in sight and in reach you are setting him up to fail. Use crates or tethers to manage him while he learns. Most incidents occur because the dog has gotten too much freedom too soon and because you got busy and weren't watching or managing when you should have been.

Don't punish mistakes. If you do your job (supervise and manage), your dog never gets a chance to get it wrong. If you don't catch him in the act, he has no clue why he's being punished. If you do catch him, say ah-ah, take

him by the collar and say, *Wanna go out*, as you lead him out the door. If he finishes outside, reward him and smack yourself for not watching him more closely or managing him properly.

Dogs will likely need to eliminate several times during the first hour or so of the morning. Take him out once before breakfast and twice after breakfast—about fifteen minutes apart. If he doesn't eliminate, put him in his crate, tether him near you, or confine him to a safe area that is no larger than about 4 ft X 4 ft. Take him out every 20 minutes until he has done what he needs to do. After that allow him some freedom, if you are there to manage or watch him. Take him out every two hours. As he begins to get the hang of it, extend the time to every three hours, etc. Remember that if he's more active, he'll need to go out more often. He'll likely need to eliminate any time he's played, had a serious chew, had a meal, a large amount of water, or otherwise gotten excited. Learn his patterns and watch him carefully to learn his cues that tell you he's gotta go *now*.

Most dogs will sleep through the night without incident. Don't let this fool you into believing he's housetrained. Don't assume you can give him any unsupervised access to the house or let him out of sight until you've had at least three weeks with no incidents and you've paid enough attention that you know his "warning" signs.

If you are still having problems after a few weeks, you aren't following the rules or your pup may have a urinary tract or parasite problem. Consult your vet.

Marking

Male dogs are more likely than female dogs to mark. Marking in an unneutered male is usually often about claiming territory but it is also frequently a response to stress. Both male and female dogs will mark. Male dogs will usually mark a vertical surface—a corner or the side of a chair for instance. This is one way to determine if the problem is marking or incomplete housetraining. Mild corrections (ah-ah) are appropriate if you see him about to lift a leg. Take him outside and praise/reward if he urinates outside. If your girl or boy is otherwise housetrained but is leaving smaller amounts of urine only occurs if you aren't home, suspect separation anxiety and seek help from your group, veterinarian, or a qualified behaviorist.

All alone am I

These guys have never been alone in their lives. They have always had the company of other dogs and a steady stream of people around. This is the very condensed version of alone training. After he's had a few hours to get his bearings and you've taken him outside to relieve himself, show him the stuffed Kong and put him in his crate/safe area with it. Close the crate door or the baby gate and sit close enough that he can see you but can't get to you. After about 15 minutes, release him and immediately put the Kong back in the freezer. An hour or so later, repeat this exercise only leave the room for a few minutes. When you return, release him and remove the Kong. Gradually increase how long you are out of sight. If this is going well, you should be able to get him to be comfortable being alone for several hours before you need to leave him to go to work. Just be sure the stuffed Kong is only present when you are out of sight and disappears as soon as you return. Don't forget to practice with the lights off. Keeping a radio or TV on to soft music or a talk station can help block outside noises that might be stressful.

If your boy seems unduly stressed by your absence, soils his crate or safe area, whines barks or cries excessively, or destroys objects only in your absence (especially if he directs his destruction to doors or other ways out), he may have separation anxiety. The sooner you acknowledge the problem and seek help, the easier it is to address. Contact your group or a behaviorist for help as soon as possible.

Life's Little Surprises

If you haven't lived with a GH before, one of the biggest surprises you have in store is your first experience on leash when he sees something he thinks he's supposed to chase—a squirrel, a bird, a rabbit, or just something blowing in the wind. If you aren't prepared for this, you'll be on your butt and he'll be running off down the street.

Set him up to learn that leash lunging is never appropriate. Before you take him out scan the area closely for anything he might want to chase. Keep it in sight and watch him closely. As soon as he spots his target, be ready. The instant he goes to lunge, give his leash a tug as you shout *no* in your deepest harshest voice. As soon as he takes the pressure off the leash, praise him and treat him. Most dogs learn in a few repetitions. Even if you have a fenced yard, walk him on leash at first so you can do some training and help him get familiar with the yard.

Don't think this lesson applies if he's off leash. **Never allow your GH outside off leash in an unsecured area.**

The Dreaded Great Escape

Best way to deal with it is prevent it. Most early escapes fit into one or more of these categories— improperly held/improperly fitted collars, exiting cars, opening doors to admit visitors, letting kids (including young teenagers) hold leashes, gates that weren't properly closed or accidentally left open. Recognize that GHs, when stressed or in fear will do what they do best—RUN.

Keep a short leash fastened near your doors so you can fasten your new dog before you open the door to admit visitors or see them out. Keep a short leash (short enough to keep him from a door or from falling off a seat) and harness permanently fastened inside your car so your dog can be tethered when doors are being opened and closed.

Plenty of ID is a great insurance policy. My guys are all microchipped and all have two separate collars—a Martingale and a loose fitting tag collar that rests below the Martingale— both of which have ID tags on them. The reason I have a second collar is that well-meaning, but not dog-savvy strangers will often remove a collar to read the contact info. My ID tags include a group ID tag and a personal ID.

If your dog escapes and is no longer in sight, immediately call your adoption group. They can rally helpers for a search and begin checking local animal control and other appropriate places. Do not wait while you first try to find him yourself.

If he is in sight, resist the temptation to run toward him. That almost guarantees he'll move away from you. Try coaxing him toward you as you back slowly (preferably with a smelly tasty treat in your hand). Unless he sees something to chase or something frightens him, he'll likely want to come to you—just keep calm. Use your prey call and move away from him to encourage him to chase you.

Here are the keys...be home by 10:00

Prepare to feel overwhelmed. New experiences and changes in our lives are rarely stress-free. You may find times in the first few months when you ask yourself—"What the %@!! was I thinking?" It will pass as you and your new pal get to know and understand each other. For the first three or four days, your guy may act as if he isn't on the planet with you. Then you'll begin to see his personality evolve. Again at about week three you'll see more changes as he gets more comfortable with his environment and gets a better read on you. And around three months you'll have a pretty good idea of who this guy really is, 'though the full transition from track and kennel to hearth and home can last most of the first year.

Remember to take things slowly—especially when he first arrives. Keep walks short and near to home. If he balks he's not being stubborn—he's telling you he's stressed. You've taken him too far from his comfort zone too soon. Take it slower. I know you want to show him off, but keep outings to new places short and pleasant—lots of calm praise, treats. Fifteen to twenty minutes is usually plenty, but for many dogs that is too long. Gradually increase your time in these situations. And if your boy is one of those who simply doesn't do well in new environments, accept it or work with a professional to help him improve.

If your pal won't take treats in a strange situation or new place, he's too stressed to be there. Get him out of there now.

BOLA (Be on the Lookout for)

Many behavior problems can be managed if you take action as soon as they begin. Contact your group or a qualified behaviorist if any of the following don't resolve in a few weeks

Sleep startle that doesn't resolve in a few weeks, or worsens—especially if it includes anything more than a growl and the dog holds his ground rather than runs.

Space guarding—a snarl, growl, snap or bite when the dog is clearly awake and he doesn't want to let you into his prize space—his bed, your bed, a sofa or simply a space he's claimed on the floor.

Signs of Separation Anxiety as mentioned above

Food bowl or valued object guarding

Any aggression (including snarls, growls, snaps, or bites—even if the bite left no marks)