

FOUND & FEARLESS

foundandfearless.shop

First 30 Days With Your Rescue



A week-by-week guide to the first month after adoption -
for dogs, for cats, and for the people who said yes to them.

"Rescue Changes Everything."

You did a beautiful thing. Let's do this together.

You didn't just adopt a pet. You rewrote a story - and the noisy, joyful, sometimes exhausting first 30 days are where that new story takes shape.

This guide exists because so many new rescue families have the same questions on day three, day twelve, and day twenty-five. Why is she hiding under the bed? Is it normal that he barely eats? When will she stop looking out the window toward the shelter they came from?

The honest answer: the first month is a landing, not a test. Your new family member is learning a whole language - your voice, your rhythms, your home, your heart. This planner walks you through that landing week by week, so you always know what's normal, what's next, and when to ask for help.

The 3-3-3 rule, in brief: most rescues need **3 days** to decompress, **3 weeks** to learn your routines, and **3 months** to feel truly at home. You are not behind. You are right on schedule.

Whether you adopted a pup who bounces or a cat who watches from the shadows - slow down with them. The bond you're building this month is the foundation of everything.

"Found is just the beginning."

A calm homecoming starts with a calm space

You don't need a perfect house. You need one quiet corner that belongs to them from the first minute. Set this up the evening before - an hour of preparation saves a week of stress.

For dogs

- ☐ A bed or crate draped with a blanket - dogs choose dens over open floor
- ☐ Sturdy water bowl, plus the food the shelter was feeding (switch gradually)
- ☐ Short leash, collar with a tag, poop bags
- ☐ One chew toy - just one; too many choices overwhelms
- ☐ A blanket or towel that smells like your home

For cats

- ☐ One quiet room closed off for the first days - bathroom is fine
- ☐ Litter box (uncovered), same litter the shelter used
- ☐ Water bowl, food bowl, same food as the shelter for now
- ☐ A hiding spot - a box with a blanket is perfect
- ☐ A scratching pad and a wand toy, kept simple

For both: book the first vet visit within the first two weeks now, while you remember. Store the vet's number and the shelter's helpline in your phone. You'll feel better knowing they're there.

01

Let them land

This week is about decompression. Expect caution, quiet, and a little grief for the only life they've known. That is not rejection - that is adjustment.

- ✓ **Keep it small.** One room for a cat, a den corner for a dog. More house equals more stress right now.
- ✓ **Offer, don't chase.** Sit near them, read aloud, be predictably boring. Let affection be their idea.
- ✓ **Keep meals steady.** Same food, same spot, same times. Appetite often dips for 24-48 hours - totally normal.
- ✓ **Limit visitors.** The whole neighborhood can meet them in week three. Right now your home is a quiet pond.
- ✓ **Dogs: skip the dog park.** Short leashed walks, no off-leash freedom yet. Many rescues bolt when new places scare them.
- ✓ **Cats: let them hide.** Hiding is coping. Put food and water near the hideout and let the territory grow on its own.

Win of the week: they eat a real meal, use the litter box or go outside, and fall asleep near you. That's it. That's everything this week.

02

Routine builds trust

You'll notice small brave moments this week - a nose bump, a longer glance, a tail at half-mast. Routine is what turns nerves into trust.

- ✓ **Same rhythms daily.** Walks, meals, playtime, bedtime. Boring is the friendliest thing you can be.
- ✓ **Name games, not commands.** Reward them simply for responding to their name. Obedience class can wait until month two.
- ✓ **Dogs: open one room at a time.** Supervised freedom grows with earned trust - and with successful housetraining.
- ✓ **Cats: begin scent introductions** to other pets (door-swap by night). No face-to-face meetings yet.
- ✓ **Treat generously.** Every new good experience gets a reward. You're building a highlight reel of "this home is safe."



Win of the week: they come to you on purpose - for food, for a scratch, for a nap at your feet. Remember how far under the bed this started.

03

The real personality blooms

Settling takes about three weeks. Around now the quiet pup discovers zoomies, and the invisible cat claims the warmest chair.

- ✓ **Let the surprises be okay.** Personality shifts are the mask of fear coming off - even the rowdy ones are a good sign.
- ✓ **Dogs: begin gentle manners work.** In drips, not drills - five minutes of "sit"/"touch," always ending on a win.
- ✓ **Cats: widen the territory.** Open another room. Expect curious night patrols and a brave return to the old hideout.
- ✓ **Introduce the world slowly.** New people, new sounds, one novelty at a time. Watch body language and honor it.
- ✓ **Book that vet visit** if you haven't already. Records review, booster shots, microchip check, diet guidance.

Win of the week: you meet the actual animal beneath the shelter shell. You'll laugh this week. Take a photo of them sleeping somewhere silly.

04

A new family, thirty days in

By day thirty most rescues feel home. The nerves are mostly gone; what's left is a family still fine-tuning its dance.

- ✓ **Lock in the rituals.** The walk route, the nap spot, the treat before bed. Rituals are what home feels like.
- ✓ **Keep training light and kind.** A rescue's trust is still young - praise and patience beat strictness every time.
- ✓ **Dogs: consider a calm introduction** to friendly dogs, leashed and short. Socialization happens at their pace, not yours.
- ✓ **Cats: expect full-roam confidence** - and perhaps the first full-body stretch on the forbidden cushion. You've been adopted.
- ✓ **Secure their safety for the long haul.** Confirm the microchip is registered to you, ID tag has your number, and the home is pet-proofed.

"Nobody ever regretted being patient with a rescue."

Week 1: Letting them land

Five unhurried minutes, once a week. Future you will be so glad you wrote this down.

How is my rescue settling in?

Sleeping? Eating? Hiding? Watch, then write what you see.

Today's win

Even tiny counts - a tail wag, a full meal, a brave step closer.

Something we're working on

A habit, a fear, a rhythm you want to build.

Something I'm grateful for

They chose to trust you. What does that feel like?

Week 2: Building trust

Five unhurried minutes, once a week. Future you will be so glad you wrote this down.

A brave moment I noticed this week

The first nose bump, long glance, or play bow.

Today's win

Consistency pays - what is getting easier?

Something we're working on

Leash manners? New rooms? Other pets? Name it.

Something I'm grateful for

What made you smile today?

Week 3: The real them blooms

Five unhurried minutes, once a week. Future you will be so glad you wrote this down.

Who is my rescue becoming?

Quirks, play style, favorite spots - meet the real them.

Today's win

The zoomies? The purring? Celebrate it.

Something we're working on

Growth edges can be joyful too.

Something I'm grateful for

For them, for you, for this month.

Week 4: A new family

Five unhurried minutes, once a week. Future you will be so glad you wrote this down.

Thirty days in - what do I want to remember forever?

The way they look at you now. Bottle it in words.

My rescue's favorite thing

A toy, a walk route, a sunny cushion, you.

Our goals for the next month

Training, adventures, naps - dream a little.

Something I'm grateful for

End the month where it started: gratitude.

Notes by species

Dogs

- ✓ Housetraining: back to basics even for adults. Schedule beats corrections.
- ✓ Nipping and jumping spike this month - redirect to a toy, never punish.
- ✓ Crate doors open, by choice. A crate is a bedroom, not a time-out box.
- ✓ Two meals a day adults; puppies every 8-12 hours with water always available.



Cats

Two weeks of one small room beats everything. New boxes should be clean, uncovered, and filled with the same litter they knew - changes happen in week four, slowly, half-and-half. Window perches beat cuddles for early confidence. And da-dawn "song" at 4 a.m.? That's live communication, not misbehavior - feed earlier, play harder at night, and the household rhythm will find itself.

"Small spaces make brave cats."

When to call for help

Adjusting is rocky. But call your vet or your rescue's helpline right away - don't keep waiting - if you notice:

- ✓ No food for more than 48 hours (dogs) or 24 hours (cats)
- ✓ Vomiting, diarrhea, or lethargy that lasts a full day
- ✓ Coughing, sneezing with eye discharge, or labored breathing
- ✓ Escape attempts or destructive panic when left alone - fear, not spite
- ✓ Growls, hisses, or swipes that escalate rather than ease by week three

Keep these on your fridge: your vet's number, your rescue's helpline, and the nearest 24-hour emergency vet. Calling early is a kindness, not an overreaction.

This guide is friendly guidance from rescue lovers, not veterinary or medical advice. Your vet and your rescue organization are your true north.

FOUND & FEARLESS

Found is just the beginning.

Thirty days in, you're not an expert - you're something better.
You're their person. And that's all you ever needed to be.

Stay in the pack: find more rescue guides at
foundandfearless.shop - and share your first-month wins
so the community can cheer you on.

"Rescue Changes Everything."

FOUND & FEARLESS - EST. FOR RESCUE DREAMERS
foundandfearless.shop