

Dear Adopter,

Congratulations on your new dog! We are very happy that you've chosen one of our rescued dogs as your new family member. We want you to have a long and happy life together. This packet is aimed to provide you with a lot of information to help you have a smooth transition.

In this packet, you'll find the following resources:

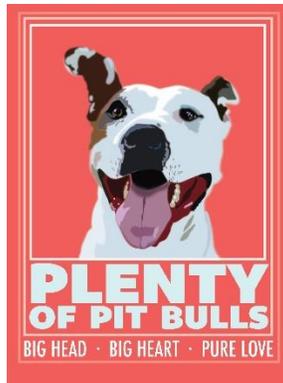
1. Tips for a Smooth Transition
2. Setting up for Success
3. Health and Veterinary Care
4. Joining our Community
5. Return Policy
6. Adoption Contract (you can sign and return this, or you can sign our online contract)

After you finalize your adoption (by returning the contract), you can transfer the microchip to your name and get your dogs' veterinary records. Our dogs are registered with Pet 911 microchips, which provides free lifetime registration. You'll be able to keep it updated and make changes as needed.

Last, please stay in touch! We hope you'll join our Facebook group for volunteers and adopters (Facebook.com/groups/plentyofpitbulls) and also email updates to [gainesvillepitbulls@gmail.com](mailto:gainesvillepitbulls@gmail.com). Whenever you have questions, please let us know.

Best,

*The Plenty of Pit Bulls Volunteer Team*



## TIPS FOR SMOOTH TRANSITIONS

Here are some suggestions to start your life together right.

**Equipment:** If you haven't had a dog before, you may wonder about the necessary equipment. You'll need a collar and leash and perhaps a walking harness (like Easy Walk). You'll also need food and food and water bowls (we prefer stainless steel). Depending on your plans, you probably want a bed and crate as well, and treats and toys, of course. You can talk with the dog's fosters to find out what the dog is used to, and we'll be happy to answer questions as well.

**Routines:** You should also make sure to ask the dog's foster family for information about their feeding schedule, daily routine, and anything else you'd like to know. You won't think of everything at the beginning, so feel free to check in later if something arises (like: has my dog ever been to the beach? I don't know if she'll like the water).

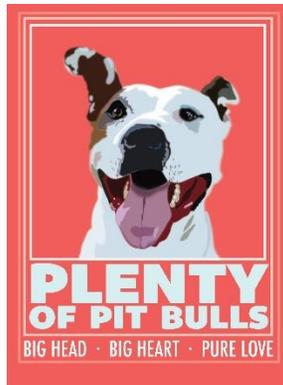
### Two Rules for Happy Transitions

#### 1. GO SLOW

This is especially important for introducing your new dog to your resident pets and other animals (and also people) in your life. By "Slow," we are taking days and weeks, not minutes and hours. Sadly, we've seen some promising adoptions fail because adopters rushed this part. It's unnecessary and it makes everyone sad. With new dogs, don't let them off leash unsupervised until you've had a lot of supervised time with them separated by crates, baby gates, or leashes. Side-by-side leash walks are our favorite way to introduce dogs. With cats, keep your dog on leash (inside and out) initially, and always make sure your cat has a safe place out of the dog's reach. We can give you lots more advice and help if you get in touch, so don't be shy!

#### 2. BE PATIENT

New dogs often have a few setbacks and test boundaries during their transition period, including accidents in the house or separation anxiety. You may also find that your resident pets have some unusual behavior issues during the transition time as well. This is normal and with patience and consistency, it will pass with time. In our experience, it's not unusual for the transition period to last a few weeks or even a month or two. Please don't hesitate to ask for help!



## SETTING EVERYONE UP FOR SUCCESS

Our rules for the immediate transition also apply to all changes: Go slow and be patient! Here we provide more general and long-term tips for a long and happy life together.

### **Be proactive!**

It's easier to prevent problems than to solve them. Many common behavior issues can be avoided or minimized if you plan ahead. Feeding dogs in crates or separate rooms can prevent resource guarding, for example. We can give you tips to help with lots of other common issues, such as pulling on the leash, storm phobia, or jumping on new people. The trick is to have a plan and be consistent in implementing it – and patient with yourself and your dog as you both adjust.

### **Training**

Training is fun – and a great way to get to know your dog and strengthen your bond. We work with Pups Gainesville, which offers a drop-in a training class every Sunday for POPB adoptables and alumni. It is free for our adoptable dogs and all adopters receive one free session (5 classes, which need not be taken consecutively). There you can work on basic commands, loose leash walking, and polite greetings. You'll also learn the basic principles of training so you can keep working with your dog at home. PUPS also offers advanced obedience and nosework classes and classes for dogs with reactivity issues. Please ask for details!

We recommend positive reinforcement training. It is effective and humane. Harsh methods and unskilled trainers will make the problems worse in the long run. Please be wary of anyone (trainers, friends, etc.) who talk about being the “alpha” or who urge you to try shock collars or other aversive tools and tactics. Dogs are smart and sensitive and they want to have a good relationship as much as you do. If you try to hurt them or scare them into good behavior, you'll end up with an anxious dog, not a well-trained one. If your dog has behavior issues, tell us and we will connect you with a trainer who can address the problems and strengthen your relationship with your dog.

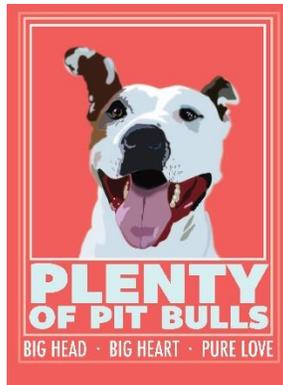
### **Don't Panic!**

Inevitably there will be rough spots. As in relationships with people, relationships with dogs change over time, and perfect harmony is never possible. When something does go wrong –

because it will – don't make decisions in the heat of the moment, but do ask for advice and support. You'll find that other dog owners have experienced the same problem and can help you find a solution that works for you. This is especially true during transitions (a new home, new schedule, new pet), but issues will arise at every stage of your life with your dog.

### **Don't Set your Dog Up for Failure**

The flip side of setting your dog (and yourself) up for success is to make sure you are not inadvertently setting yourselves up for failure. In hindsight we can see that we laid the conditions for a problem, often by rushing a transition, over-estimating a dog's tolerance or training, letting someone (a new person, child, or dog) corner your dog, or failing to notice a dog's warning signs. Remember, your dog is an individual with preferences and feelings, and while dogs in general are very tolerant and willing to please, they have limits. We know you love your dog and want to make your adoption work, and we will be glad to offer more detailed advice about specific situations at any time. Just ask!



## **HEALTH AND VETERINARY CARE**

All our dogs are neutered/spayed and up to date on age-appropriate vaccinations. We will treat all medical issues prior to finalizing the adoption, so if you adopt a dog who is still being treated (e.g., for heartworm or demodex), we will consider your adoption a “foster-to-adopt” until all treatment is finished. (The only exception is chronic conditions, such as a seizure disorder or allergy that requires ongoing medication.)

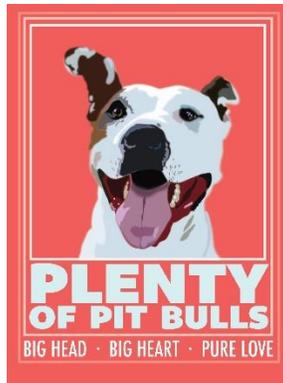
When you finalize your adoption, you’ll receive your dog’s vet records. Please take a careful look so you know when he or she needs to go for her annual exam and boosters. Puppies will need additional shots throughout the course of their first year. If you adopt a puppy, we recommend purchasing a “puppy package” (offered by most vets) as the most economical way to ensure that your puppy receives all necessary vaccinations.

All adopters receive a free initial exam at Gainesville Animal Hospital (east or west) or Archer Animal Hospital. This is a wellness exam, so that you can establish your dog as a client in order to purchase heartworm and flea preventative, if you don’t already have a vet. The appointment needs to be within a week of the finalization date on your contract, so please don’t wait too long, and please bring your dog’s records and the dated contract with you. Our vets donate their time and care to help us out, so we want to respect their schedules.

Heartworm is very common in our area. Dogs here need heartworm preventative every month, all year round. Our dogs receive theirs on the first of each month. You can purchase heartworm preventatives from your vet or online from sources such as Pets Megastore. Dogs who have been in heartworm treatment must have a negative heartworm test (at least 6 months after treatment finishes) in order to switch to a non-ivermectin based heartworm preventative (such as Trifexis). Until then, please use only ivermectin-based heartworm preventatives, such as Heartguard.

Florida dogs also usually need year-round flea preventatives. There are topical and oral options – please ask us if you’d like suggestions.

Skin issues (allergies, itchiness, redness) are very common for Florida pit bulls, and our adopters and fosters have a wealth of advice and information about ways to treat them. Our Facebook volunteer/adopter group is a great place to get advice if this is an issue for your dog.



## **WELCOME TO THE CLUB!**

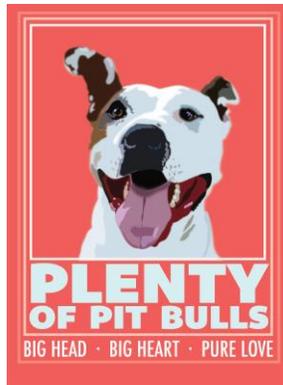
We're very happy to welcome you to the Plenty of Pit Bulls community. Many of our adopters become friends and take advantage of our fabulous group of dog lovers. We hope you will also want to join us – we have lots of opportunities for you and your dog to socialize with human and canine friends, including pack walks, training classes, picnics, and more.

Our Facebook volunteer group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/197129926975645/>) is a great place to learn about upcoming events, get health, training, and behavior advice, and ask about things like where to find a dog-friendly beach rental.

If your dog is a pit bull, then we want to give you a special welcome. Now you will never watch TV alone again... or eat alone, or go to the bathroom alone.... you get the idea.

We love our pit bulls more than anything, and we rejoice in the steady progress towards acceptance that we see every day. However, it sadly still true that some people fear our big-headed dogs. If you haven't had a pit bull before, you might be surprised by negative comments from friends, neighbors, or relatives. And you may have to face breed discrimination in rental housing or home insurance. We try to give our adopters moral support and fact-based arguments to counter negative stereotypes. We think the best way to make positive change is to present positive examples of nice dogs with nice people.

Of course, “nice” doesn't mean “perfect,” and people with pit bulls have to be extra careful to manage their dogs' behavior so that we don't contribute to negative stereotypes. Unfortunately, big headed dogs are often judged harshly for normal dog behaviors than other types. That means that if your dog gets picked on at the dog park and responds defensively, or jumps on someone who doesn't like dogs, or chases the neighbor's cat, other people may respond more aggressively than they would if you had a dog who did not carry those negative stereotypes. This places an unfair burden on us, but we owe it to our dogs to be vigilant and keep them safe. That's why we recommend avoiding dog parks, always keeping your dog on leash in public places, and being slow and careful when meeting new people and dogs (and cats, horses, etc.). We urge you to look into training opportunities and also to take advantage of our pit bull friendly group walks, classes, and play dates. We also offer support and advice when you hit bumps in the road, so please tell us if you need anything!



## **RETURN POLICY FOR ADOPTERS**

Our adoption contract states: If at any time I feel unable to keep my dog, I will notify POPB. I understand that the rescue has limited resources and may not be able to take the dog back but will provide as much support as possible. I will do my best to seek help for behavior and veterinary issues, and if I determine that I absolutely cannot keep my dog, I will rehome him/her safely and responsibly.

Here we spell out what that means regarding returns.

1. We do not have the resources to take back all dogs whose adopters decide not to keep them. When you adopt a dog, you accept responsibility for your dog's welfare for the rest of his or her life, which can be 15 years or more. Please consider this carefully before you commit to adopting.
2. If you are considering surrendering your dog, we do require you to notify us. Please think of this as right of first refusal. It is not a promise to take your dog, but a good-faith commitment to work with you for your dog's long-term safety and well-being.
3. We will try to help you find resources to keep your dog, including training and behavior help or information about affordable vet care or dog-friendly housing. We can also recommend boarding kennels for short-term solutions.
3. If it is absolutely not possible for you to keep your dog, we can offer advice and resources for you to safely rehome your dog.
4. On occasion, we can take a previously adopted dog back into our adoption program. That requires a foster home, an updated behavior evaluation, and proof that your dog is up to date on vaccinations and is on monthly heartworm preventative. We will ask you to foster your dog (or find a new foster home) and cover your dog's food and veterinary costs until adoption.

**PLENTY OF PIT BULLS ADOPTION CONTRACT**

Adopter Name

Date of Birth

Name of spouse/partner/roommate

Address

City

State

Zip

Primary Phone :

Alternate Phone

Email Address

Dog's name (in POPB records)

**Your signature on the bottom of this page indicates that you understand and agree to fulfill the following commitments. This is a binding contract with Plenty of Pit Bulls (POPB).**

1. I will provide continued heartworm preventatives and flea and tick control
2. I take full responsibility for my dog's care and will meet my dog's medical needs. POPB is not responsible for medical care once an adoption is finalized.
3. I will not leave my dog chained, tethered, or penned without direct supervision.
4. I will notify POPB of my new address and phone number(s) when I move or change jobs.
5. If my dog has behavioral issues, I will seek help from a trainer and do my best to keep my dog in the home. POPB offers free advice and support, and we can refer you to qualified trainers and behaviorists as well.
6. If I decide not to keep my dog, I will inform POPB. We can help you with advice and support for safe rehoming. We cannot promise to take the dog back, since this depends on our available space, but we do have right of first refusal.

Adopter signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Adopter signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

POPB signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_