



Two week Decompression Protocol Setting Your Dog Up for Success!

Decompression is not limited to a newly adopted dog.

Please see tips at the bottom for following this protocol for a dog you did not recently adopt.

The Excitement Trap: What Most People Do When Bringing Home a New Dog

It's totally natural to be excited when you bring home a new dog. Most people can't wait to:

- Introduce the dog to all their friends and family
- Take the dog on errands and adventures
- Let their other pets meet the new family member
- Flood the dog with attention and affection

While your excitement is valid and well-meaning, this flood of new experiences often overwhelms the dog and unfortunately, the results aren't always positive.

What We Hear a Few Days Later:

- "I don't think it's working out."
- "She barked and nipped at my child."
- "She got into a fight with one of our dogs—what do we do?"

Here's the Secret to Success: Slow. Everything. Down.

Many dogs coming into new homes have been in shelters, boarding facilities, foster homes, or unstable environments. They are overstimulated, confused, and unsure of what's happening. The best thing you can give them is time and space to decompress and feel safe. That's what the Two-Week Decompression (also called the Two-Week Shutdown) is all about.

Imagine This...

You're home, napping on your couch, when suddenly someone drags you out, tosses you in a car, drives you hours away, and drops you into a foreign city. You don't speak the language, you don't recognize the surroundings, and everyone is a stranger. You're scared and overwhelmed.

Now imagine you find a small quiet room. It's cozy, it smells safe, and a kind stranger brings you food. Would you rather stay there and get your bearings, or immediately start shaking hands and touring the city? Exactly. This is how your dog feels. The Two-Week Shutdown gives your dog a "safe room" to start learning their new life at a manageable pace.

What Is the Two-Week Shutdown?

The Two-Week Shutdown mimics the security of a whelping box—a place where puppies rely solely on their mother and their senses to navigate the world. For adult dogs, this time helps them reset, observe, listen, and learn without being bombarded by unfamiliar sights, sounds, people, and pets.

We want the dog to form a bond with you first, not your other pets, neighbors, or coworkers.



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What You'll Need:

- Wire/Metal crate (large enough for the dog to stand and lie down)
- Crate pad or blanket
- Sheet or blanket to cover crate sides (makes it feel safe and cozy)
- Baby gates (to limit access to parts of the house)
- Martingale collar
- Two leashes (one sturdy for outdoors, one lightweight for inside)
- Training treats
- Kong toy (with peanut butter or canned pumpkin)
- Dog-safe noise maker (for safe noise correction, to get their attention quickly)

Crating and Structure

Place the crate in a quiet area—not the center of the chaos. Drape it partially to create a cozy den-like space.

For the first couple of weeks:

- Feed all meals in the crate.
- Let the dog out for water, potty breaks, and short time with you (20–30 mins at a time).
- No access to other pets yet—use baby gates to keep them separate.
- When the dog returns to the crate on their own, respect that as a need for quiet time.

All good things come from you: food, toys, potty breaks, praise. This helps build trust.

In the Home

Let your dog drag a light leash inside. You can hold it or tie it to your belt to help guide and correct without chasing. Use clear commands like:

- “Off” (for furniture)
- “Down” (for jumping)
- “Quiet” (for barking)
- Always follow correction with praise when they get it right.

Praise should be short and positive: “Good dog!” or “Nice job!” This helps your dog begin to understand your language. Avoid overwhelming them with affection—they’ll come to you when they’re ready.

Walks, Play, and Socialization

Keep walks short and within your yard or quiet streets. No dog parks, pet stores, or long car rides unless necessary (like vet visits). Avoid meeting other dogs or people for now—your dog needs time to focus on you and adjust.

Playtime should be calm and safe. Toss a toy, walk on a long line if you have space. Always supervise.



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No New Dog Friends Yet

Hold off on introducing your new dog to other pets. If you must crate them in the same room, don't allow nose-to-nose contact yet. Separate rooms preferred. We want your dog to bond with YOU first, not your resident dog(s). Otherwise, they may follow the other dog's lead and not learn to trust or respect you.

Ignore Whining for Attention

Crying, whining, or barking doesn't always mean distress—it could be testing boundaries. Don't reinforce this behavior by rushing over. If your dog learns that noise brings attention, it'll be harder to break. Trust your instincts to know the difference between distress and manipulation.

Two Weeks Later...

You'll start to see a different dog. More relaxed. More curious. More trusting. This is their real personality emerging.

Once the dog begins to look to you for guidance, you can slowly begin to:

- Increase time out of the crate
- Begin introductions to other pets
- Practice simple training cues like "sit" or "come"

Let your dog experience more of the world—on their terms

Final Thoughts

The Two-Week Shutdown is the SAFETY, STABILITY, and STRUCTURE every dog desperately needs—it's about setting up your new dog for success. We assure you, while it may feel counterintuitive at first, its only "tough" on us as humans. They feel secure and grateful for the ability to rest—even if they seem anxious or bored. Whether they're shy, confident, rowdy, or fearful, this process works because it gives them time to learn you before they have to learn everything else. You don't need to force leadership. By staying calm, consistent, and patient, you'll earn their trust—and that's the foundation of everything. So please: slow down, take a breath, and give your new dog the gift of time. TRUST THE PROCESS!

*You CAN Teach an Old Dog New Tricks:

You can begin the Two-Week Decompression Protocol at any point in your dog's life. Decompression and routine or intervalled crating is the least costly and most effective way to change unwanted behaviors. In fact, the rule of thumb is to utilize the Two-Week Decompression protocol anytime there's change to the dog's regular routine (moving, new baby, new pet, new work hours, guests staying over, a dog scuffle or behavioral incident, etc.) Once the two - three week period is up, ideally, you'd continue crating on an intervalled basis or

- when you're not home
- at night
- guests or visitors come to your home (yes, even a delivery person)

Most importantly, dogs, like kids, require effort and consistency. If you do not provide both to your dog(s) it's unfair to expect improvement. The best way to save dogs is to keep your own. **You got this!**