

The Home Visit Volunteer's Guide to GRREAT Policies and Procedures (2013)

If you've ever wondered what GRREAT's stance is on certain subjects or you've ever been asked, "So what happens next?" by an applicant, this guide is for you. If you need any additional information, please contact the Adoption Coordinator, adoptions@grreat.org, 301-503-3963, or your Home Visit Coordinator.

Procedures:

Summary of the Application Process:

- An applicant fills out and mails in an Adoption Application to the Application Coordinator (APPC) for their state (VA/DC/WV or MD/DE/PA).
- The APPC will do an initial review to determine if the application is ready for a Home Visit (HV) and will also note any areas of concern.
- The information is then emailed to the appropriate Home Visit Coordinator (HVC).
- The HVC will assign the HV to a Home Visit Volunteer (HVV).
- The HVV should call the applicant within four days to set up an appointment to bring a Golden and complete the HV with all family members being present. This includes the nanny if he/she is solely responsible for the dog during the day. (Remember, the HV does NOT constitute approval)
- The HVV will use the Home Visit form (newest versions of which can be downloaded from the website, <http://grreat.org/admin/>) and will write a report of the visit with special emphasis on any areas of concern. This form will be sent to both the HVC and the APPC.
- The APPC will review the Home Visit Report for completeness and will then forward it, together with the application, to the Adoption Coordinator (AC) for disposition.
- The AC will notify the applicant of GRREAT's decision within 10 days and will send the most recent Available Dog's List if the applicant has been approved.

**Each application will remain active for 6 months from the time of approval. After 6 months, the application is automatically de-activated. An applicant can notify the AC to re-activate their application for another 6 months, provided that there are no major changes (e.g. change of address, new family member, etc). This can be done for up to two years from the date of original approval. After two years, a new application and home visit must be done.

Summary of the Adoption Process:

- Once approved, the applicant is able to get information about GRREAT's Available Dogs in three ways:
 - Adoption Days: held once a month, usually on the first Saturday, in various locations in MD and VA. Visit the calendar section of the website or newsletter for location and directions.
 - Available Dogs List: emailed once a month, about 2 weeks after the Adoption Day. Each dog's description will also contain the Foster Home name and contact information.
 - Website: updated throughout the month as dog's become available. An approved applicant can email the AC to get Foster Home contact info.
- The applicant should read the description of each dog to determine if they have the circumstances and lifestyle that match the dog's personality and needs. If the applicants believe that they might be a match, they should contact the appropriate foster home for an interview. If the foster home also feels that the applicant is a likely match, a face-to-face interview will be set up.

- The foster home may interview several families before determining the best match for their particular foster dog.
- If an applicant has not heard back from a foster home, they should contact the AC for more information.
- If the applicant is chosen as the best match, the foster home will go through the Adoption Contract with the applicant.

****Adoptions are never first-come, first-served. A foster home may interview several families before deciding on the right one.**

****The applicant must be self-motivated and contact the foster homes; GRREAT does not assign them a dog.**

Policies and Guidelines:

GRREAT's main focus is to find safe and loving Forever homes for our Golden-in-need. As an organization, GRREAT has been Rescuing dogs for over 20 years. Our collective experience on dog ownership and safety has helped to form policies and guidelines that are used when considering a new adoptive family.

Outdoor environment, fencing and dog doors:

- GRREAT dogs should not be left outside for long periods unattended or for ANY period when no one is home. This includes the use of dog runs/dog kennels. The ONLY exception to this is the use of a dog door with a SECURE fence. The fence must be: non-jumpable, with a locking gate, and must be in an area that is non-conducive to dog theft. Dog doors + electric fencing is never allowed.
 - The following is an excerpt from our "Rejection" letter that explains why we feel outside dogs are exposed to an unacceptable level of risk. "... Our experience with Rescuing 1000's of dogs over more than 20 years is that dogs left outside unattended, even for short periods of time, are exposed to an increased risk of dog theft, environmental, and biological hazards. These risks may include escaping from boredom or curiosity, development of inappropriate behaviors, exposure to sudden severe weather, tick-borne diseases, other animals, and opportunity for strangers to molest, upset, or even steal them, etc..."
- The type and planned use of fenced areas will determine the type of Golden that would be appropriate for that particular family. The lack of fencing or the use of electronic fencing **is not prohibited** but may impact a foster family's decision-making depending on the suitability to their current foster dog.
 - No fence; Applicant should be aware that they may be responsible for leash-walking several times a day in ANY weather. They also need to provide a safe way for off-leash playtime, especially for younger dogs (e.g. securely fenced dog park). An on-leash walk around the neighborhood, even if done several times a day, is not sufficient to burn off puppy or young-dog energy.
 - Tie-outs are useful when used appropriately (e.g. when family is also outside with the dog, potty breaks, etc). They should not be used when the dog is unattended.
 - Electronic fence: should be installed and trained by a professional company – there are right ways and wrong ways to train a dog to this type of fence. The negative aspects should be reviewed; dog may "break" the boundary if reward is high (e.g., chasing a squirrel) but may not "break" it to come back, there is no barrier to keep any other animals or people out, collar batteries need to be frequently checked, dog learns by negative reinforcement (unpleasant electrical shock).

Proper use of crating:

GRREAT does recommend the PROPER use of crating/gating for many of our Rescued Golden. If used appropriately, crating is NOT cruel. If you need more detailed information, we can send you the pamphlet, "A Pet Owner's Guide to the Dog Crate." Crating/gating is not only useful for training and helping a new dog adjust to a

household; it is also useful for “denning”. Many dogs, even if perfectly house-trained, still need a space (den) that they can call their own. As an example, after using a crate to train a dog, it may be left up with the door standing open so the dog has a secure place to retreat to for afternoon naps or to take a break from visiting kids or foster dogs. The purchase of a crate is a suggestion not a requirement.

- Training: Used as a starting point for housebreaking. Combined with “earned freedom” it can be a powerful and humane teaching tool
- Initial adjustment: Provides a “safe haven” for a new dog in a new environment. Also keeps new dogs separated from each other while the owner’s are not home until everyone has a chance to get used to each other and a routine, expectations, and pack order are established
- Denning: Provides dogs with their own den where they can nap or take some personal time. The crate should be off-limits to children.
- Crating for more than 4 hours at a time (except for overnight) is HIGHLY discouraged.
- Crating should NEVER be used as a punishment
- Review total hours per 24 hour period that a dog will be crated (crating overnight + during the work day may equal 16+ hours a day!)

Dog Nutrition:

GRREAT recommends that our dogs be fed a good quality dog food. This lessens the likelihood of food allergies, poor coat and teeth, and health risks associated with added chemicals and poor nutrition (e.g. cancer, etc).

BRING A DOG FEEDING BROCHURE AND GRADING WORKSHEET WITH YOU TO THE HOME VISIT

- **Read the label:**
 - At the very least, the first ingredient should be meat from an identifiable source (e.g. chicken, lamb, beef, etc), not meat by-products or any other ingredient.
 - Be cautious about fillers, many Golden Retrievers are allergic to corn, wheat, and soy
 - Avoid artificial colors, artificial flavors, added sweeteners, and preservatives like BHA and BHT, ethoxyquin (these have been linked to cancer)
 - Grocery store brands are of poorer quality than those found in pet stores
- Brands:
 - GRREAT recommends visiting www.DogFoodAnalysis.com and www.whole-dog-journal.com before choosing any brand of food.
 - Here is a sampling of the better brands of food: Innova, Orijen, Taste of the Wild, Wellness, Blue Buffalo, Artemis, Merrick, Fromm, Pinnacle, Solid Gold, California Natural, Eagle Pack. You can visit each brand’s website to find local retailers.
- Other recommendations:
 - GRREAT recommends feeding twice daily.
 - Free feeding is often not conducive to a Golden’s gluttonous nature. Many Golden Retrievers cannot self-regulate and unhealthy weight gain could result. It is also more difficult to have a predictable elimination schedule, which can make housebreaking more difficult. In multiple dog households, food “guarding” or food “hogging” behaviors are possible.

- Maintaining the proper weight is very important to a Golden's health and well-being. Excess weight can contribute to poor joint health, increased stress on the heart and lungs, and a variety of other health issues for which Golden Retrievers are prone and which can contribute to a decrease in quality and length of life.
- Snacks and treats should be given in moderation.
 - Many commercially available treats are loaded with corn or wheat fillers, which can contribute to allergy problems. Check for preservatives! Many treats can also be considered as "empty calories" and can contribute to unhealthy weight gain.
 - Rawhides are typically not recommended:
 - they can promote inappropriate behavior,
 - they are of little nutritional value,
 - they can be a choking hazard, and
 - many of them are bleached with unhealthy chemicals.
 - Rawhides should only be given under direct supervision. All Rawhides need to be MADE in the USA to avoid pesticide poisoning.
 - GRREAT can recommend a variety of more healthy alternatives to low-value, store-bought treats (e.g. frozen carrots, beef-gelatin ice cubes, frosty paws, etc).

Vet and Basic care:

- Each GRREAT dog spends a minimum of two weeks, and often longer, in a Foster Home. The foster home uses this time to evaluate the dog for temperament, behavior, and health concerns. The dog is taken to a vet for a health check, shots, and neuter/spay if not already done. Unless there is an indication of a problem, GRREAT does NOT routinely screen for eyes, hips or heart. Any known or suspected medical issues are addressed and full disclosure is given to the adopting family. However, there are NO GUARANTEES that any problems, including unknown, pre-existing issues, will not surface after adoption.
- New Owners are expected to take their dog to the vet within two weeks of adoption for an initial check-up. Thereafter, they are expected to revisit the vet at least once a year for vaccinations and a check-up. Proper vet care is far less expensive than treating an illness, and is essential for the health, well-being, and early detection of disease in Golden Retrievers.
- Applicants should also have or be given an idea on basic care for Golden Retrievers in regards to:
 - Grooming (Golden Retrievers shed!)
 - Keeping feet and nails trimmed (not only for appearance but for the comfort and safety of the dog)
 - Ear cleaning (Golden Retrievers are prone to ear infections)
 - Regular teeth cleaning (Gingivitis can contribute to bad breath, loss of teeth and poor health).

Contract Issues:

Applicants should be prepared to agree to GRREAT's policies and procedures when they sign an adoption contract to adopt a GRREAT dog. These include but are not limited to:

- An adopter agrees that if they cannot keep the dog for any reason, the dog must be returned to GRREAT. The adopter cannot "privately" place the dog.

- All GRREAT dogs must be identified by a GRREAT supplied microchip. This will usually be completed before adoption. If it hasn't, the adopter will be required to attend the next closest Adoption Day to have it done. Adoptions are not final until this step is completed.
- The adopter will agree to keep the GRREAT ID tag on the dog's collar at all times. This is **in addition** to the personal ID tag which the adopter will obtain (GRREAT has pre-paid tag order cards for new adopters).
- Obedience classes may be required by the foster home, not only for foster dogs that could use some help with the basics, but also to help new owners, especially first-time owners, learn how to communicate effectively with their new dog. If required, a deposit of \$50 will be given in addition to the adoption donation and will be refunded upon proof of class completion. A well-mannered dog reflects responsible ownership.
- ADOPTION FEES ARE NOT REFUNDABLE

****Thank you for taking the time to conduct home visits for new applicants.
Your efforts are essential to re-homing Golden Retrievers that deserve a second chance and are
GRREAT-LY appreciated!!**

Please contact the Adoption Coordinator or your Home Visit Coordinator if you have any questions!