



Rizzo 349783: What to Expect

Rizzo is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home. Rizzo is a bowling ball of love, fun, and delight. She rushes into life with the all the enthusiasm her body can hold. Her interesting mix makes her a character and has endeared many adoring fans during her time at OH. Rizzo loves to play, go for sniffari walks, and hangout on the couch with her human friends. Rizzo's history prior to coming into OH is a mystery. We feel Rizzo would do best in a low traffic quiet home away from the hustle and bustle of a busy neighborhood that has frequent foot or vehicle traffic. She can be a bit of a wrecking ball during play and jump up on people or grab onto loose fitting clothes in her excitement, she would do best in a home without small children, so she doesn't overwhelm, knock over, or accidentally hurt them.

During her time at OH we've been able to introduce Rizzo to multiple dogs to gauge her comfort and sociability. She has had conflicting interactions with dogs. When out on walks or behind a barrier, Rizzo can be reactive to other dogs with barking, pulling, and lunging at other dogs. On attempts to say hello, if the other dog is calm Rizzo can approach and sniff the other dog, but quickly goes into herding rough and rowdy play, which many other dogs finds rude. With dogs who also bark in excitement to meet, Rizzo gets amped up and will end up jumping on or snapping at other dogs on approach. She is still working on those social skills to be successful in uncontrolled situations with other dogs like at dog park, doggie daycare, or leashed greetings with unknown dogs. Slow introductions in controlled settings like a backyard with known dogs will help Rizzo learn how to appropriately greet other dogs, but we feel she would do best as the only dog in the home with no other small animals like cats.

With a family who can advocate for her space and provide structure and boundaries Rizzo will be a great companion. She loves to sleep in bed next to her favorite people, play fetch, and tug-o-war. She would love adventures out in the PNW wilderness or urban adventures around your neighborhood. Her nub tail goes a mile a minute when she's feeling comfortable and confident and is waiting for a place to relax and settle.

Here's how to help Rizzo settle in during your first months together:

Designate a "safe spot" in your home. You can use a crate or taller baby gates to confine them to a smaller area where they have access to water, bed, and toys. When you are unable to supervise the dog, leave them in their safe spot. Slowly work towards leaving them alone unsecured once they've had the chance to settle into your home and you know with certainty, they will be comfortable.

Be your dog's advocate. It's okay to ask someone to stop or prevent a person from letting their dog come up to say hi to your dog. Watch their body language and help your dog out of situations if they appear stressed. Explain that Rizzo is not comfortable with dogs and doesn't enjoy meeting them while on their walk. Distance is calming.

Use routine to get Rizzo comfortable in their new home. It will take a couple weeks for Rizzo to feel comfortable in their new home and with you. Having a predictable schedule will help them adjust to their new home.

Use treats, their kibble, and toys to build trust. Maintaining and continuing Rizzo's training will create a bond and a form of communication between two species who don't understand each other. The more positive experiences Rizzo has with their owners, the more valuable you will become in high distracting situations.

If you're having people over, put Rizzo on leash so they learn not to dart out the front door or jump all over people. Once everyone is sitting down and calm you can drop the leash and allow your dog to decide if they want to go say hi to your guests, ensure your guests ask Rizzo to sit before being pet so they're rewarded for keeping 4 feet on the floor.

Rizzo needs daily exercise to reduce stress. Rizzo loves to go for runs, walks, play fetch, and chase a flirt pole. Giving your dog a healthy outlet for some of their energy will help them settle during calm hours at home.

Work on having Rizzo settle on a mat and gently praise them for lying down. If they get up to pace, call them back and use a treat to lure them into a down again. If Rizzo is on leash, you can hold them with approximately 4 feet of leash and wait until they offer a settle by lying down. Softly praise and treat when they do this.

Walk Rizzo on an appropriate walking tool. We have been using a special head halter, called a transitional leash, to help guide Rizzo to walk nicely on leash with little to no pulling. When Rizzo sees other dogs on walks, they become incredibly excited and then frustrated that they cannot run up to say hello and play, causing them to jump, pull, whine, bark, and sometimes growl. It will be important to never let Rizzo run up to other dogs on leash as that can reinforce his frustrations.

Practice crate training. Start by feeding meals in a wire crate and work your way up from there. It will be in your best interest to **slowly** increase time in the crate, so they view it as a safe, comfortable spot. When you cannot monitor your dog in the home, allow them some time to settle and relax in the crate.

"Puppy proof" your home and practice tether training to prevent them from getting into puppy/adolescent trouble. When home have Rizzo on leash, attached to you or tethered to a large piece of furniture as you go about your daily routine. This will help with potty training, bonding, and creating boundaries within the home. Let Rizzo drag the leash around the house or yard from time to time to simulate "freedom", but do not let them off leash until they can 100% be trusted not to get into things they shouldn't. This could take up to a few weeks. Crate them when you cannot watch them. This will ensure their puppy curiosity doesn't get them into any trouble. You will have long lasting success if you follow this method.

Take a training class. Rizzo would benefit from taking some training classes with their new owners and would love to learn more alongside their family in a training class. Training classes help strengthen the bond between owner and dog by creating clear and precise communication so there are no misunderstandings. You can find more info about our training classes on our website at (<https://www.oregonhumane.org/training/training-at-ohs/>).

Practice "Leave it." Rizzo may bark and lunge if they see other dogs out on a walk. When a dog is sighted, **before** they start barking, say "leave it." When they turn to look at you, reward with praise and a treat and walk away from the trigger. Distance is calming.

Skip the dog park. Don't take Rizzo to busy places where they will have lots of uncontrolled interactions with people or other dogs (such as Saturday Market, dog parks, coffee shops, etc.). Rizzo has shown us they don't have an interest in being around other dogs/people. Taking leashed hikes to the river, playing in the backyard, or to places not frequented by many other dogs will allow for exercise, but keep Rizzo calm and engaged with you.

Visiting the Vet: Unless it is an emergency, give your dog plenty of time to bond to you before taking them to your vet. Rizzo does very well at the vet, with patience they handle meeting new people well. The vet can still be a scary place. Bringing tasty treats like cheese and/or hot dogs can help make the experience more pleasant.

We're here to help!

We want Rizzo to be successful in your home. We're available to answer questions via phone and email. During your first two months with Rizzo, we can also set up a free one-on-one consultation. For questions or to schedule an appointment, contact us at **(503) 285-1145** or BMODTrainers@oregonhumane.org.

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you now and in the future. Reach out if you have questions or concerns, or just to give an update. We love to see photos and hear how our friends are doing! Thank you for adopting from the Oregon Humane Society. Congratulations on your new dog!