

### My experience with a rescue dog:

Following the loss of our family dog Meg, (an 11-year-old German Shepherd bought as a puppy) we decided, as experienced dog owners, we would now like to rescue rather than buy a new dog. This was the best decision for our family and made such an impression that none of the family would ever consider any other option in the future.

Ruby, our new dog, originally came from Greece. She and her two siblings were found on the street, all suffering from terrible mange. Despite nearly losing her life, the volunteers at Elpida Shelter managed to save her and Give a Dog a Home brought her over to England to be adopted. When we met Ruby, 8 months old, the whole family fell in love with her instantly. She was surprisingly gentle and calm for such a young dog, but we discovered she also has an energetic playful side that never fails to make us laugh. She has many quirks, including a surprising love of plastic bottles and sand and a keen nose that often leads her to long-forgotten toys that had been buried or lost in hedges. Ruby was so perfect, that we recently decided to adopt another Give a Dog a Home dog to be her playmate. Chip (Short for Chipolata) was our first smaller dog and came with his own individual, loveable qualities. Both have settled into our family so well and we can't imagine life without them around.

**Ruby**



The most valuable thing I have learnt from rescuing these dogs is that patience is essential when dealing with rescue animals. Anybody can rescue a dog, with patience and perhaps a little perseverance.

My first meeting with Ruby was far from perfect. Having just returned from a trip abroad with friends, I was dying to meet our new pup. I arrived home and excitedly knocked on the front door. Then, realising it was unlocked; I barged in noisily with my large rucksack. Woken from her sleep and terrified of this large and noisy male intruder, I was greeted with a protective barking and growling dog, nothing like the dog in the cute photos I had seen!

Despite my parents calming her down and trying to make introductions, it didn't go well and, whenever I approached or passed her, I was growled at. Having never experienced a nervous dog before, I assumed that Ruby had decided she didn't like me, or didn't want to share her home with me. It was hugely upsetting; I had been expecting a bouncy puppy wanting to be my new best mate and keen to play with me, but instead I had a nervous dog who wanted nothing to do with me.

This behaviour lasted less than two weeks, with significant improvement after the first. I learnt to not approach her but let her approach me. I learnt not to stomp or run around the house, as sudden noises would make her uncomfortable. I learnt that, though regularly feeding and walking her with my parents. she would become used to my presence. I also learnt that it wasn't something I had done wrong; Ruby was nervous around most new, tall males and, having never had a



home before, she was understandably protective over her current one.

As soon as we had overcome this small hurdle our relationship blossomed. She has taught me that, just like humans, respect is earned. Why should a dog instantly be fond of you? Are you instantly fond of every person you meet? No. It takes time to feel comfortable around someone new, so why should a dog be any different?

I have learnt the power of patience and also how impatient so many people are. Watching her become more and more confident has been amazing. Her first time on sand, first time in water, first time off the lead, first time discovering she could open doors! All of these 'firsts' were so much sweeter knowing that she has been rescued rather than bought. Her love for grass and her excitement that she could call our, particularly small and scrubby, garden her own was a delight to see. Having spent much of her early life on concrete, this new spongy green stuff offered hours of fun. She also found our cat fascinating and loved to follow her around, groom her and try (but fail) to play with her.

### **Ruby meets Fizz**



It was decided that Ruby would enjoy the company of a playmate in the house, so the search was on for a slightly smaller rescue dog. Before adopting Chip, we organised various practice walks to allow them to get to know each other. When we met Chip for the first time, we had high expectations, hoping he and Ruby would get on like a house on fire. But it was clear that both dogs were far more interested in new smells, balls and sticks than one another. Hoping they just needed some time, we continued the regular walks together and Chip even had a couple of sleepovers with Ruby. However, although they got along fine, they didn't seem to be interested in one another.

Spending so much time with Chip had inevitably caused our family to fall for him, and he had certainly become very fond of my mum: following her around and sitting at her feet wherever she went. Ruby was so patient with him, not getting jealous and happy to share her home, but there was still no playing. By this point Chip was one of the family and, collectively, it was agreed that it would be lovely if they did play but not the end of the world if they didn't.

### **Chip in his new bed.**



However, a month post-adoption, Chip and Ruby have bonded extremely well! They share beds, toys and even have started to have a play in the garden, chasing one another around. Chip has become so much more confident. Like Ruby, was initially very nervous around me at first, but given time and space, he now loves sitting on my lap and playing fetch with me.

Once again, patience was all that was needed. Not all dogs may adjust as fast as Chip and Ruby and it appears my family have been lucky that both adapted so quickly. Despite this, it seems that with time, reassurance, love and patience, any dog will feel confident enough to be itself and settle into your family perfectly.

