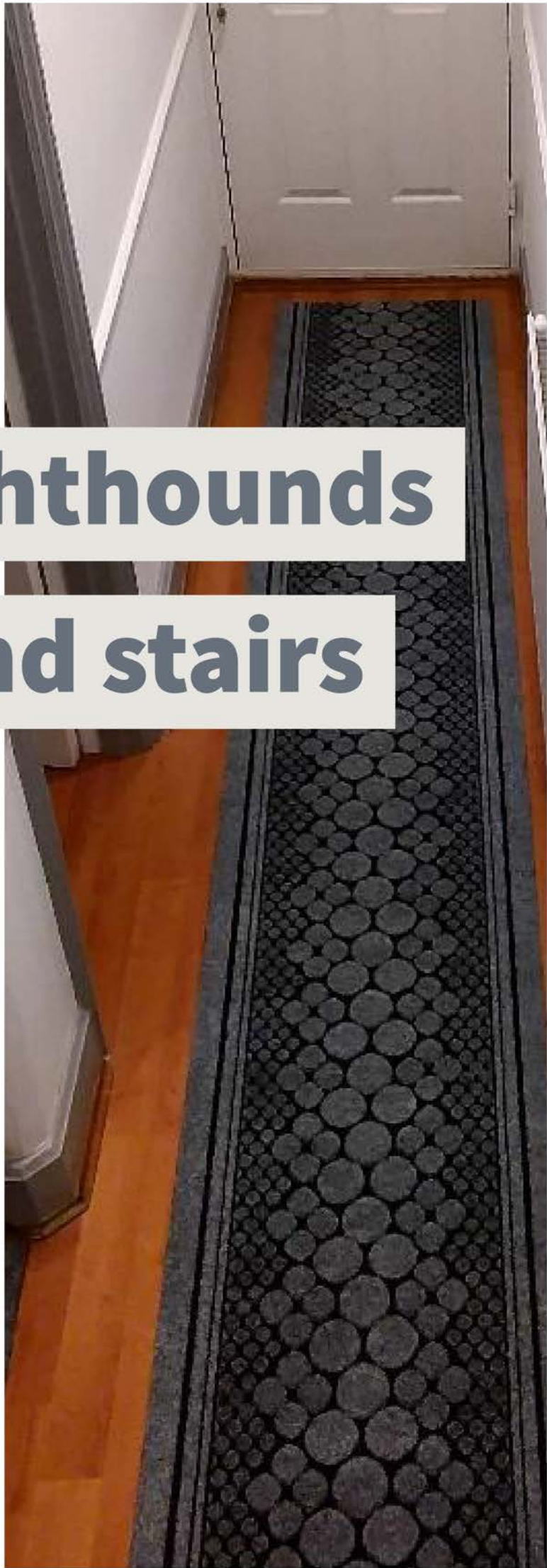
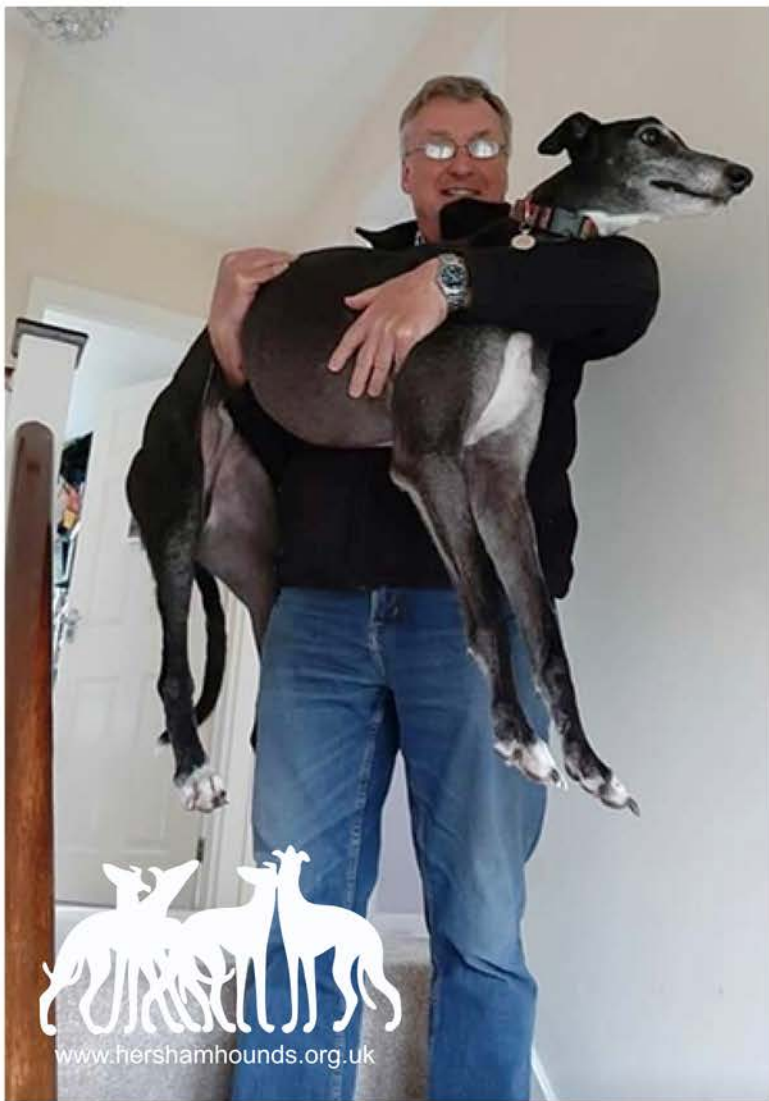




Sighthounds and stairs





Sighthounds and stairs

If your home has stairs, they may pose a challenge for your dog. Many of our hounds have never seen stairs before and have no idea of how to negotiate them. This can be a daunting experience, and it can take a while for dogs to become confident enough to safely walk up and down them.

Every dog is an individual and you will find that some dogs like to go up the stairs and some dogs like to go down. Some dogs may go halfway up or down the stairs and then freeze, and refuse to move in either direction, and some dogs simply won't attempt the stairs. Whatever your dog's response to the stairs, you can help them adjust to the challenge.



This may pose a specific issue for those potential adopters living in flats where stairs have to be negotiated to access the property. Even if you have lifts, it is always recommended you teach your dog how to safely use the stairs – because one day that lift WILL be out of order!

Safety considerations

- If your stairs are very steep, it may not be appropriate for your dog to learn how to tackle them, due to the risk of injury.
- If your dog is on restricted exercise or has other health issues, stairs may have to remain off limits. If this is the case, it is a good idea to install a baby/stair gate to prevent your dog from climbing the stairs.



- In addition to sparing you back pain from carrying a seventy-pound dog up your stairs, and to allow your dog to follow you more easily throughout your home, teaching your Greyhound how to go up stairs is also important for preventing potential injuries. If your dog has never navigated stairs before and finds himself in a situation where he needs to, then he is more likely to try to jump the stairs, run up them, or grip them with his nails, which can cause him to slip.
- The more comfortable and confident that he is climbing your stairs, the safer and more balanced he will be on other staircases also. Some

Greyhounds are simply confused by stairs and just need to be shown what to do, others are downright afraid of them. If your dog is afraid of the stairs, then be very gentle and patient. Do not force him into climbing them before he is ready, or you run the risk of only increasing his fears. Instead, wait patiently for him to take the initiative on his own, with your encouragement and enticement, then praise him and reward him for his efforts at overcoming his fears.



- Climbing stairs requires certain muscle movements, and it can take practice for your Greyhound to develop the muscle memory necessary for her to stay balanced and safe on the stairs. Anatomically, it is not easy for these dogs to master stairs. Look at their hind leg muscles!!
- If your dog is struggling with gripping the stairs, or is trying to jump over stairs, then getting her a padded harness to practice in can help.



Types of stairs and flooring



- If your stairs are wooden or open, your dog will struggle to grip the stairs and may be worried by the openings between steps. To help your dog, you will need to add some treads/carpet that provide grip.
- If your hallway or landing is not carpeted and is a wooden/laminate or tiled floor, there is an increased risk of your dog slipping and injuring themselves when they go up or down the stairs. To prevent this, we recommend that you use non-slip runners or rugs (with anti-slip rug grippers) to provide suitable traction.



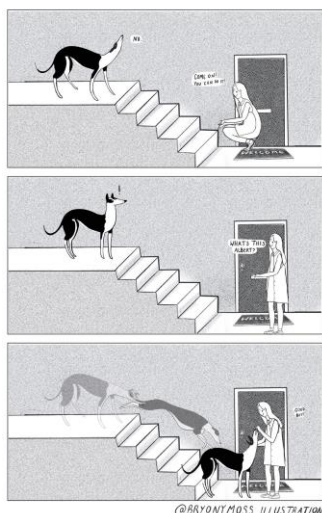
Introducing the stairs

- When you start introducing your dog to the stairs, it is important to keep training sessions brief (no more than 5 minutes) and to remain calm and patient. It may take more than one day for your dog to become accustomed to stairs.
- It is imperative that you **DO NOT** force your dog to go up or down the stairs by dragging them by their collar. If you lose your patience, stop training and give yourself and your dog a break. If you use force, you will undermine your relationship and bond with your dog and this will affect other areas of training
- Before you start your training session, make sure that you have some high value food rewards (little pieces of chopped cheese, chicken, sausage work well), and that your dog is wearing their harness. You may also find it beneficial to have a second helper and to have your dog's lead handy.

Going up the stairs

- Put a treat on the first stair and encourage your dog to eat it. Repeat this several times.
- Put a treat on the second stair and encourage your dog to eat it. Repeat this several times
- Put a treat on the next stair, slightly out of reach for your dog.
- Ensure that your helper is on the stairs in front of your dog and the treat, and that you are behind them to provide security that they will not fall backwards.
- At this stage, your dog should be confident enough to put a paw (or two) on the stairs to reach the treat
 - Praise your dog when they reach for the treat
- Ask your helper to encourage the dog to continue up the stairs, by luring them with treats
 - Remain behind your dog, following them up the stairs
- Ensure that your helper feeds them treats while they move up the stairs and that you praise them. If your dog feels insecure at any time, you can gently hold their harness or attach a lead to the back of the harness to help increase their sense of security.

Coming down the stairs



Going down stairs can present more of a risk of injury, as your dog may attempt to jump several stairs at once or run down too quickly and lose grip. You will need to supervise your dog and ensure that you NEVER let them attempt to go up and down the stairs by themselves, until you are sure that they understand the concept of taking one step at a time.

- Attach your lead to your dog's collar and/or harness (by the attachment point on your dog's back) and shorten the lead, so that your dog can't race in front of you
- Holding the lead in your hand closest to your dog, encourage your dog to take one step at a time, as you walk down by them. Hold his collar by your side in a

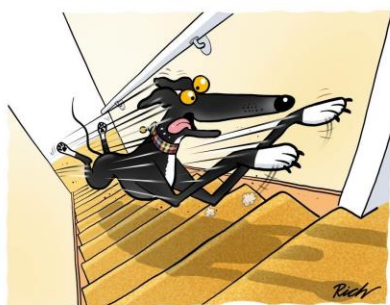
'handbag hold' for extra security.

- Take things slowly and remember to praise and reward your dog on each step
- Repeat this exercise and ALWAYS accompany your dog when they go down stairs, until you are sure that they are confident enough to do so safely.

Most dogs find carpeted stairs easier than wood. If you have polished wood stairs (or other hard surface) you may need to put carpet down. Outside, they normally seem to manage fine.



Fear of Stairs



STAIRCASE HEADCASE
A Greyhound that has overcome its fear and distrust of stairs.

For some dogs, stairs can become a struggle seemingly overnight. A sudden an unexpected hesitancy to going up or down the stairs could be for any number of reasons including:

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Injury or Pain
- Age
- Loss of Strength

- **How do you tell the reason why your dog's behaviour has changed? As your dog's owner you know your dog better than anyone.** Watch their behaviour for clues. Are they tentative going downstairs or going up? Do they seem scared or is it painful for them to use the stairs?
- Dogs are always learning, which means a new fear or phobia can develop at any time. Dogs become fearful based off recent experiences, they may have missed a step and stumbled last time they went down the stairs and are afraid **they'll do it again. Or they heard a loud noise when they were on the stairs** and think the sound came from the stairs. If your dog is showing a sudden fear be patient. Slowly encourage them with treats and praise until they become comfortable with the stairs again.

Helping an Old Dog on the Stairs

- As dogs age they are hesitant to use the stairs because **they're not sure** they can navigate them safely on their own anymore.
- Senior dogs weaken over time, their joints ache and they may start losing strength in their legs. Dogs use their back legs to push themselves up the stairs. As they age this becomes more difficult. They tire easily and, in some cases, using the stairs may even be painful for them.
- An older dog will need your help. As muscle tone is lost, they may feel like they descend the stairs too quickly. As their legs weaken, going up the stairs is exhausting. A harness that allows you to lift and support them on the stairs will give them back the confidence and control they need to safely use the stairs. Alternatively, a large towel placed underneath the dogs back end, and the ends held up on either side of the dogs body, can work as a homemade sling.



Pet Vision Loss and Stairs



- Just like us, your dog's vision can change and worsen over time. Although your dog may still have their sight, it's possible for their eyesight to deteriorate enough to affect their depth perception. This makes going down a flight of stairs daunting. Your dog may need your help to guide them down the stairs, walk next to them to give them confidence that you're there if they start to fall. When in doubt, use a pet gate to block the stairs, so your dog can only use the stairs when you're with them.

Tip: Hallways can be dark, keep the light turned on to help your dog see each step!

Helping an Injured Dog on the Stairs

Depending on the nature of your dog's injury, your dog may need additional assistance and support to help them to move comfortably and safely. Please do ask your vet to advise you on the most appropriate manoeuvre to use on your dog where appropriate.

Leg Injury

- If your dog is injured, they may need some extra help on the stairs temporarily while they heal.
- A dog with an injured leg may need a little boost going up the stairs, especially if they're wearing a splint or cast that goes under the paw. Dogs rely heavily on the feel of the ground under their paw to know they can walk safely. Using a rear end support possibly a large towel placed underneath the lower end and held up on each side of the dogs body will support their hind end and along with your guidance will help them to take their next step confidently.

Back Injury

- Back injuries can vary in severity, before letting your dog use the stairs always speak to your Vet to **determine what's best. If your dog can use the stairs**, you want to make sure their spine is always supported so they do not endure further injury, pain or discomfort.

As an owner it's important to pay attention to any changes in your dog's behaviour or any sudden fear or anxiety. This may be your dog's way of telling you something's wrong and they need your help.



Helpful Information

Kennel Manager contact info: 01932251894 or carol@hershamhounds.org.uk

Other handy guides that can be found on the Wimbledon Greyhound Welfare website include:

- [Responsible Dog Ownership](#)
- [Bringing Your New Dog Home](#)
- [The First Night at Home](#)
- [Greyhounds and Children](#)
- [Greyhounds and Muzzles](#)
- [Toilet Training](#)
- [Greyhounds as Pets](#)
- [Issues Around Food Resources](#)
- [Sighthounds and Stairs](#)
- [Spending Time Alone](#)

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