



**The**

**First**

**Night at**

**Home**



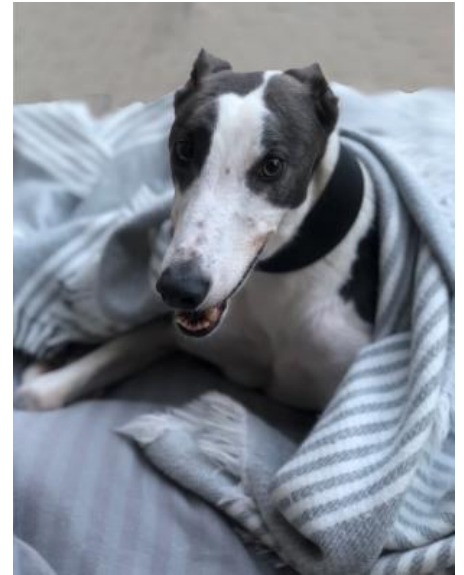
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## The First Night at Home

All our dogs are ex-racing greyhounds. As such, they are not used to spending time in a home environment, and often are not used to spending any time alone (since they have probably always been in the company of other dogs overnight and the kennels environment is a very busy one). Most people struggle to sleep soundly during their first night in a hotel, due to the unfamiliar environment – the same applies to your new dog! Following the advice below when you first bring your new family member home should set you up for successful nights in the long term.



### Where should your dog sleep?

This is entirely up to you, but you may have more success if you allow your dog to choose his own sleeping area. Dogs are social animals, and will often prefer to sleep in your bedroom, especially if you don't have any other resident dogs to keep them company at night. This is absolutely fine, and will not cause your dog to feel that he is "dominant" or develop separation issues. You may even choose, in time, to let your dog sleep in bed with you (if there's enough space for those long legs!) **but we would not advise doing this until you know your dog better, and are sure that he will not react defensively if startled awake. We would not advise a hound sleeping in children's rooms and you should not feel obliged to have your dog on your bed, as quite often, dogs can have sleep startle or can become possessive over the bed or sofa because they see it as "theirs". Remember, a greyhound in kennels is never disturbed whilst asleep. By the time their kennels are opened, the general noise of the yard sees them awake long before you get to open their door! If you have children or visiting children, we would not recommend encouraging a hound on the sofas you use, as children do not always pick up on a dog being in a deep sleep.**



- These dogs are not used to silence, and it can make them very anxious in the initial days. You can also try leaving a night light on along with the radio left on talk show at a very low volume. Be prepared that a couple of nights sleep on the

settee will pay dividends in the long run. You are teaching your grey how to sleep on his own without the need for a partner or human at his side overnight. Do not shut them in anywhere or you will cause potential separation anxiety and distress.



- The use of a stair gate on your bedroom doorway can help deal with your **dogs'** anxiety if sleeping in your **room isn't viable or acceptable**. You can set up a bed outside your bedroom (where possible) which allows your dog to see you but not get to you. Alternatively if you do not want your hound upstairs, then place an alternative bed at the bottom of the stairs which can instil a feeling of closeness in your new hound.



- You may prefer your dog to sleep elsewhere in the house, which is not a problem – however you should be prepared to build up to this gradually. Wherever you choose, it is important to provide a suitable bed. Many greyhounds prefer a large duvet or cushion bed on the floor which allows them to

stretch out, whilst others may prefer a bucket bed or even a toddler mattress. Some like beds with sides as that keeps draughts at bay. There are a huge variety of beds out there!

Since greyhounds **don't have much padding of their own, make sure any bed you provide is suitably thick and cushioned enough** to keep him comfortable. They are also more susceptible to the cold than other breeds, so it is vital that they are kept warm. During the winter your dog may need to wear a fleece coat overnight. As a **general rule, if it's too cold for you not to wear a jumper, it's too cold for your hound to sleep without a fleece!**

*Fleeces which are greyhound specific are available to purchase from the kennels or via the link on our website which will keep your new friend warm, toasty and asleep all night!*

## Getting ready for bedtime



- Try to keep everything calm and relaxed during the couple of hours before bedtime. Avoid exciting activities such as going for a walk, or playing high energy games. Chewing and licking are both soothing behaviours which can help put your dog in a calm state of mind – try providing a long-lasting chew, or a toy stuffed with soft food for your dog to lick. Avoid squeaky toys whilst you are settling a hound in, as it can hype them up and is what is often used to encourage them to chase for racing, which you are endeavouring to turn around. It could also send out **a mixed message about small 'squeaky' sounding small dogs.**

- Make sure your dog is in a draught-free sleeping area, with access to a suitable bed, and that she is warm enough. A greyhound does like to be snuggled up, so always remember she may need a warm overnight fleece (and possibly a blanket) on to avoid those middle of the night alerts that **she's too cold!**

- Always make sure that your dog has been out to toilet directly before bedtime. Rather than just putting **your dog outside and assuming he's toileted, it is best to go out with him and make sure he has**, especially if he is not yet house trained. Walk them round the garden on a lead to encourage him to urinate, and ideally defecate as well. Remember to praise and reward him for toileting outside!

- Provide fresh water. Many dogs are not used to sleeping in total darkness, and may prefer to have a nightlight or lamp left on for them. Playing soft music or white noise at a low volume can help to cover any noises from outside which may disturb your dog during the night.



- If you already have a resident dog, you may want to use a dog gate to separate them from your new dog at bedtime to start with. This will allow them to keep each other company, but prevent any disagreements from happening overnight. You may, if you prefer

**choose to muzzle both dogs overnight if separating isn't practical or possible.** This is normal practice when dogs are being paired up in kennels for the first few nights until we assess their compatibility.

## Setting up for success

- In the past, adopters were commonly advised to start as they meant to go on in regards to overnight **arrangements. This meant leaving the dog to "cry it out"** in another room, in the hope that they would simply get used to sleeping on their own. We now know that leaving a distressed dog to howl and bark overnight is much more likely to cause ongoing issues with separation and time alone (not to mention disagreements with your neighbours!).



- Think about it from your dog's point of view – he's in a totally unfamiliar place, and is already feeling somewhat stressed and anxious. On top of all **that, he's now been left totally alone for possibly the first time in his life!** He has no idea whether he's safe, and whether you're ever going to come back. It is completely understandable that he would be upset in this situation, and is likely to howl, cry and bark in **order to make contact with you. By ignoring your dog's distress and leaving him alone all night, you will simply confirm his fear that being left alone is a bad thing, to be avoided at all costs!**



- What we want to do is help your dog to feel safe and secure overnight from the start. This means considering your options and preferences - either allowing him to sleep in your bedroom initially (or on the landing with a dog gate on the bedroom door, so that she can still see you), or sleeping with her in whichever



room you have chosen for their bed. That may mean a few nights sleeping on the couch, but doing so immediately establishes bedtime as a safe, positive time for your dog.

- You should expect a few disturbed nights at first – your dog may want more reassurance, be more alert to noises, or need to use the toilet more than usual.
- Ideally you should stick to this arrangement for at least the first few days to a week, so that your dog is feeling as settled as possible before you start changing things. At this point, you can start gradually moving your dog's bed away from the bedroom (or moving your bed out of the dog's room). Dog gates on doorways can be very helpful during this process! If your dog becomes distressed at any point, go back to the previous stage and change things more gradually. Remember that there is no problem with allowing your dog to sleep in your bedroom permanently, and many dogs will be most comfortable with this arrangement.



**We do stress however that you should not allow the dog on your bed at any stage until you have settled the dog into your home, and you have had time to assess any issues they may have e.g. resource guarding, sleep startle. Greyhounds share their kennels with a mate, but like people, some hounds prefer the bed to themselves, so you need to know your hound really well. You should not feel obliged to have your dog on your bed. If you have any issues getting your dog to settle overnight, please don't hesitate to contact us for help and advice.**



## Helpful Information

Kennel Manager contact info: 01932251894 or [carol@hershamhounds.org.uk](mailto: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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