

ADOPTION TIPS

Midwest Akita Rescue Society
www.akitas.org



Dogs will be dogs. They are guaranteed to pee, poop, chew, dig, bark and bite. So if you invite a dog to live in your home, it is up to you to teach them where, when and how. ~ Dr. Ian Dunbar

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All information in this booklet is based on the experience and opinion of our volunteers and members. It is shared on the understanding that you take complete responsibility for your actions. In particular, the outcomes of any training activities are unpredictable and therefore cannot be guaranteed in any shape or form. For best results consult an experienced dog trainer to supervise any training program, and an experienced veterinarian for any health related matters.

INTRODUCTION

Bringing home a new dog is an exciting time. It can also be a bit unnerving, especially for the dog. Whether your Akita was being fostered in a home or kennel, this move is yet another change/challenge in their life. You know all the wonderful plans you have made and the great life you want to give your dog, but they don't know that. This new change in their living environment is going to be a stressful situation for him/her.

Calm leadership, and time, will help them realize that they are truly home. Some Akitas adjust in a few weeks, some can take longer. Being prepared ahead of time will reduce the stress and the amount of time needed to adjust—for both of you.

Your first week together is especially important. It will become the foundation for your relationship. After fostering and placing hundreds of Akitas, we have learned a few tricks that can help the transition go a little more smoothly:

- 🐾 **Develop a plan**—what are the house rules, what is the daily routine, who is the primary caregiver, where will the dog stay during the day, where will it sleep at night, what words will you use for basic commands? *Consistency is crucial* so make sure everyone is in agreement. Many adopters have found it handy to post key rules and commands on the fridge. This is especially helpful if there are children in the household.
- 🐾 **Buy the basics ahead of time**—it is less far less stressful and confusing for the dog if you have the basic necessities on hand. Eliminate the need to keep running to the store and you *reduce the chance of sending mixed signals* to the dog.
- 🐾 **Prepare your home**—what you need to do will depend on whether you are adopting a young dog or an adult. Pick up anything that might harm your dog (chemicals, medications, electrical cords, etc). Store objects that might be tempting to chew (shoes, slippers, etc) or could easily be knocked over and broken. *Set the stage for success.*
- 🐾 **Have a backup plan**—in the event of an emergency or if you need to be away from home. If you don't have a Veterinarian, find one before you bring your new Akita home and know where the closest ER is located. Visit Clinics and kennels, ask to set up a time for a tour and interview the staff. Once your Akita is settled in, it is helpful to *test your plan before you need to use it*. A short successful trial run(s) can make those longer stays less stressful.
- 🐾 **Take a deep breath**—relax and *most importantly go slowly*. Your new Akita will need time to bond to you and to adapt to its new home and routine. Keep in mind, this is not your previous Akita, it has its' own personality and will most likely do things differently—that's what makes this breed so exciting!

Remember you can always email or call us with any concerns or questions!

PRE-ADOPTION PREPARATION & SHOPPING LIST

FOOD AND SUPPLEMENTS

- 🐾 High quality kibble and treats (no wheat, soy or corn)
 - You can also use grain free kibble or bits of leftover meats for training treats
- 🐾 In the event of stomach upsets:
 - Canned pumpkin (plain, not pie filling)
 - Plain yogurt (not Vanilla, no sugar, no artificial sweeteners)
 - Pedialyte (store brands are okay, do not dilute, offer 3-4 ounces every hour or so)
- 🐾 Peanut butter is great for stuffing kongs
- 🐾 To help ease the transition to new surroundings or help with separation anxiety:
 - Melatonin – 3mg tablets, one tablet daily in the morning or before you leave
 - Bach's Rescue Remedy – use for a more immediate calming effect in any stressful situation. Note: never use the Pastilles (candy) version; they contain an artificial sweetener that is very harmful to animals

EQUIPMENT

- 🐾 Crate with rubber stall mat or similar (see crate training below)
- 🐾 Food and water dishes
- 🐾 Collar & leash (MARS provides all orphans a martingale collar, leash and MARS ID tag)
- 🐾 Drag lines – a long leash for inside and a length of rope or cotton lunge line for outside
- 🐾 Baby gates
- 🐾 Kongs or similar chew toys for large dogs
- 🐾 Toys/stuffies

MISCELLANEOUS

- 🐾 Stain and Odor Remover – even a housebroken dog can have an accident during the adjustment period
- 🐾 Pooper scooper bags

REFERENCE/TRAINING

- 🐾 Positive Training Websites:
<http://www.dogstardaily.com/> or <http://www.terrificpets.com/articles/dogs/training/>
- 🐾 Trainers/Behaviorists - Find a trainer in your area at www.apdt.com

Please see the last page for additional resources

FOOD, TREATS AND SUPPLEMENTS

FOOD AND TREATS

- 🐾 Akitas do not do well on anything with corn, wheat or soy. Some Akitas can have issues with any type of grain and require grain-free kibble, home cooked food or a raw diet.
- 🐾 While treats are very small they often have high wheat content so check the ingredient list before purchasing any treats, including treats that look like meat. Grain free kibble or bits of healthy leftovers make excellent treats. It's all in the presentation!
- 🐾 We recommend human-grade; all natural kibble and many of the brands listed below also have grain-free products:
 - Naturapet - www.naturapet.com Innova, Evo or California Natural
 - Canidae -- www.canidae.com
 - Solid Gold -- www.solidgoldhealth.com
 - Wellness - www.wellnesspetfood.com/dog-wellness.aspx
 - Nature's Variety - www.naturesvariety.com
- 🐾 These type of dogs food and treats are more expensive than those you buy in grocery stores or many of the large pet store chains, but you normally do not need to feed as much as the less expensive brands. Plus, you will be spending less on visits to the Vet and your dog will be healthier and happier. Some people spend hundreds, if not thousands of dollars on allergy treatments and medications when all they needed to do was switch to a better food.

SUPPLEMENTS

- 🐾 A wide variety of supplements can be used to help skin, allergy, joint and anxiety issues. Many of our adopters and members use a wide variety of products from the following companies:
 - Aunt Jeni's –homemade, organic diets, treats and supplements. www.auntjeni.com
 - Springtime, Inc. – wide variety of pharmaceutical grade natural supplements. www.springtimeinc.com
 - Grizzly Salmon Oil or Fish Oil - helps with allergies and improves skin and coat
 - Doggie Defense by ActiPet – boosts autoimmune system and helps support your pets' well-being. Available in health food stores or online at www.vitaminworld.com and www.bodybuilder.com (both sites offer good discounts.)

THE FIRST WEEKS — OVERVIEW

With a little work and some planning, your new dog will be a well-behaved companion for years to come. It is important to recognize that first impressions are lasting ones and habits begin to develop from day one. Be sure to instill good manners and habits from the first day you bring your new puppy or dog home. Remember, good habits are as hard to break as bad ones.

1. Teach your new dog the rules of your house from the beginning. In the words of Dr. Ian Dunbar, “If you want your dog to follow the rules of the house, by all means do not keep them a secret.” When your dog first gets home, he or she may be a little confused and unsure of the new living situation. Even though your home is undoubtedly comfortable, it is different than where your dog came from, and different can be stressful. It is important to remember dogs do not speak our language and will best understand your expectations through training and management. Training and management should begin the very moment your new dog arrives in your home. Your instinct may be to give your new friend a few days to unwind and adjust before imposing rules and restrictions. While you may mean well, this delaying of training has the potential to be both frustrating and damaging. Right from the very first day, it is crucial to convey your expectations to the dog and to establish an errorless training system. If you change the house rules a few days after your dog has arrived, he will not understand why things have changed. Your dog may have already formed new habits and will have a difficult time adjusting to yet another set of expectations. It is much more efficient to teach your dog everything you would like him or her to know from the outset.

2. Try not to overwhelm your new dog with too much activity during this initial adjustment period (individual dog’s adjustment period will vary). It is very exciting to have a new dog. Of course you want to introduce her to all of your friends and family and of course you want to take your new pal everywhere! All this excitement however could be exceptionally stressful for your dog. Please keep in mind that even in the best of situations your dog’s world was probably limited to a handful of environments and activities. It is best for your dog to spend the first couple of weeks quietly settling in and getting to know you with brief and frequent outings to continue the socialization process. In the beginning, limit introductions to just a few visitors at a time. If your dog has time to become familiar with you and your home surroundings, she will be more confident when setting out on adventures beyond your immediate neighborhood.

3. Keep your new dog either safely confined with appropriate chew toys, or supervised at all times. This is the best way to keep your new friend (and house!) out of trouble when you are unable to monitor his actions. Your dog requires a dog-proof, safe place: a “doggie den” where he can rest and chew appropriate items in your absence. There are many options but a crate or small room in your house is ideal. Initially when your dog is loose in the house or yard you must be around to gently redirect your dog when he chooses an inappropriate activity. If you are vigilant about supervising your dog and showing him what you expect, your dog will learn to settle down quietly, to chew only appropriate chew toys and eventually to become trustworthy in your absence.

THE FIRST WEEKS — MARS' TOP TIPS

- 🐾 **Implement Your Game Plan** - Teach your new dog the rules of your house from the beginning. In the words of Dr. Ian Dunbar, *"If you want your dog to follow the rules of the house, by all means do not keep them a secret."*
- 🐾 **Adopt the Nothing In Life is Free Training Philosophy** - Requiring your dog to work for everything he wants is *a safe, positive, non-confrontational way* to establish your leadership position.
- 🐾 **Go Slow** - Upon bringing your new Akita home, be sure not to overwhelm him/her with too much change and/or interactions. *It takes time to bond.*
- 🐾 **Set the Stage for Success** - *Manage the environment*, measure success in small increments and have realistic expectations.
- 🐾 **Use a Crate** - *Your new Akita will need his or her own space along with structure to ensure a good transition.* Crate training is a good life skill for all dogs to have. Crating will assist in setting boundaries, facilitate training, and provide a safety net for all involved.
- 🐾 **Use a Drag Line** - While allowing your new dog to explore your house leave their leash (or a piece of rope) attached for the first couple of weeks and let it drag on the floor behind them. This will allow you to *safely and gently guide the dog while teaching them* about your house rules and expectations.
- 🐾 **Slowly Introduce Your House room-by-room** - Don't allow your dog free run of the entire house right away, or else *your new friend may learn all sorts of bad habits.* First take the time to teach him good habits
- 🐾 **Save The New Bed** - A newly adopted Akita may chew its bedding, so *save the new bed and gear until your Akita has settled in.* Old sheets and towels work well and will help you determine when your dog is ready for its new bed.
- 🐾 **Immediately show your dog to his/her toilet area.** Then take your dog to the designated area once an hour until they relieve themselves. *Allow supervised free time only after he relieves himself in the appropriate area.*
- 🐾 **Practice Bonding Exercises** - Once your Akita is starting to relax try the bonding exercises.

NOTHING IN LIFE IS FREE (NILIF) PHILOSOPHY

You have resources—food, treats, toys, and attention. Your dog wants those resources. Make him earn them. That's the basis of "Nothing in Life is Free." When your dog does what you want, he gets rewarded with the thing he wants.

HOW TO PRACTICE "NOTHING IN LIFE IS FREE"

- 🐾 First, use positive reinforcement methods to teach your dog a few commands and/or tricks. "Sit," "Down," "Come," and "Stay" are useful commands. "Shake," "Speak," and "Roll over" are fun tricks to teach your dog.
- 🐾 Stop giving away resources. Do you mindlessly pet your dog for no reason? Stop. Your attention is a valuable resource to your dog. Don't give it away. Make him earn it.
- 🐾 Once your dog has mastered a few commands, you can begin to practice NILIF. Before you give your dog anything (food, a treat, a walk, etc.) he must first perform one of the commands he has learned. For example:
 - 🐾 In order for you to put your dog's leash on to go for a walk, he must sit until you've put the leash on.
 - 🐾 When you feed your dog, he must sit and stay until you've put the bowl on the floor.
 - 🐾 Play a game of fetch after work and make your dog sit and "shake hands" each time you throw the toy.
 - 🐾 Once you've given the command, don't give your dog what he wants until he does what you want. If he refuses to perform the command, don't give in. Be patient and remember that eventually he will have to obey your command to get what he wants.
- 🐾 Make sure your dog knows the command well and understands what you want before you begin practicing "NILIF."

THE BENEFITS OF THIS TECHNIQUE

- 🐾 Requiring your dog to work for everything he wants is a safe, positive, non-confrontational way to establish your leadership position.
- 🐾 Even if your dog never displays aggressive behavior such as growling, snarling, or snapping, he can still manipulate you. He may be affectionate to the point of being "pushy," such as nudging your hand to be petted or "worming" his way onto the furniture to be close to you. This technique gently reminds the dog that he must abide by your rules.
- 🐾 Fearful dogs may become more confident by obeying commands. As they succeed in learning more tricks, their continued success will increase confidence and ultimately lead them to feeling more comfortable and less stressed.

WHY THIS TECHNIQUE WORKS

Dogs want good stuff. If the only way to get it is to do what you ask, they'll do it. Good leadership encourages good behavior by providing the guidance and boundaries dogs need. Practicing "Nothing in Life is Free" gently and effectively communicates to your dog that you are the leader because you control all the resources.

CRATE TRAINING

OVERVIEW

A crate provides your Akita with a secure place to go when people, thunderstorms or fireworks overwhelm him. In addition, you will also need to arrange for a safe and quiet place when potentially rowdy visitors, like young grandchildren or teenage friends come to visit your home.

PREPARATION

- 🐾 Start crating the first day, and while you are home. Do not wait until you have to leave!
- 🐾 Place the crate in an active family area, so they do not feel isolated.
- 🐾 Placing a rubber stall mat inside of, or in lieu of the tray eliminates the sound of the tray hitting the crate and provides sure footing allowing the dog to relax and feel more comfortable in their crate. You can find stall mats at most farm supply stores.
- 🐾 To eliminate dogs pushing out of a wire fold-down crate reinforce all joints with plastic zip/tie wraps; make sure to cut the excess material. Reinforce the door with spring lock clips (don't use a leash as they can pull that into the crate and chew it)

TRAINING TIPS

- 🐾 Feed them in the crate with the door open, toss in a favorite toy and let them bring it back out. Make it a game and have fun! Provide plenty of treats and rotate the use of million dollar treats like bits of ham, turkey, salami, cheese, and hot dogs.
- 🐾 Toss in a knuckle or shin bone and only let them have this, or some other very special treat when they are crated. With a new dog always be careful when taking away high value items, especially when the dog is confined in the crate.
- 🐾 Leave them in for a short period of time, go about your normal routine, ignore any bad behavior, like chewing, whining etc. Once they are quiet for a few seconds let them out. Do not fuss or make a big deal, just let them out and go about your business.
- 🐾 If you leave the area, do not re-enter unless the dog is quiet, for at least a few seconds.
- 🐾 Practice Drive-by Treating - when the dog is quiet, gently drop in tasty treats as you pass by the crate. Do not stop, do not say anything.
- 🐾 Find a special toy or treat that they only have when they are in the crate (when you are at home)
- 🐾 Give them stuffed Kongs with treats in the crate. Freezing the Kong will make it last longer.
- 🐾 Learn to measure success in seconds. Keep a log, things can seem to move slowly and most people don't realize they are making progress until they start charting their efforts.

BONDING EXERCISES

When adopting a rescue dog there are many different levels of adjustment you and your new dog will go thru. While you know your home is a safe and secure environment, this is yet another change to the Akita. You and your family are still complete strangers to him and it takes time to build trust. This can take from days to weeks. There are a few very simple exercises that you can work on to build that trust and strengthen the bond.

Note: if you have worked with clicker training in the past these can be clicker exercises, if not then ignore the click and just treat.

EYE CONTACT

- 🐾 Note: *you never want to stare down or use eye contact to intimidate your dog.* These behaviors can be threatening and the purpose of this exercise is to gain your dogs trust.
- 🐾 Teach your Akita that making eye contact with you is safe and a positive experience. Get some high value treats like bits of liver treats, hot dogs, chicken, etc. With treats in hand sit either on your couch or a chair and make yourself comfortable and relaxed. Hopefully the dog will have followed due to the yummy treats. Get the dog to either sit or lay down in front of you. Of course click/treat for just doing that. Now with the dog in front of you, every time the dog makes eye contact or looks up at you click/treat. It may initially take several minutes, but once your pup gets wind of what is going on he will associate making eye contact with you with getting yummy rewards, and will look forward to doing so. Now repeat with family members. From here we move to Touch.

TOUCH

- 🐾 Again start off with your Akita sitting and use high reward treats. Hold out one hand to the side and down towards the dog. The goal is to get the dog to touch the hand with his nose. When he does this click/treat. Initially, if he touches you at all with any part of his body go ahead and treat, but the goal is to have them touch your hand. The dog then associates the food rewards with touching his new human companion, thus contact is a good thing. Keep working on the hand touch after a few times start working the command "touch", once the dog really gets a hang of it, then move to the other hand. Once that is mastered, then you can stand up and hold out your hand and ask him to touch. From there you can start moving around the house and put out your hand and give the touch command and the dog should come and touch your hand and then he gets his reward. Eventually this can turn into another form of recall. You can make this into a game and it is a bonding game where the dog is learning to trust to come to you without actual work involved. Again, you can work on this with all family members.

COLLAR

- 🐾 After you have mastered the touch command, you should work on kind of a reverse scenario to desensitize the dog to getting his collar touched/grabbed. For various reasons, there are always times that we need to be able to go for our dogs' collars and the dog should not fear it. However, when adopting a rescue dog you have no idea what they went thru previous to coming into the rescue, so it may be safe to say they have suffered some sort of trauma at one time or another. The dog needs to learn that it is ok for his new humans to grab his collar from time to time. As always, you need some wonderful treats and lots of them. Start with just having one or two in your hand and let the dog smell your hand and give the treat. Then take your hand and move slowly towards the collar but do not touch, with other hand give treat. Repeat several times. Eventually move closer to the collar. You will then just touch the collar lightly, and then treat. Do this several times. If the dog is comfortable with that, you can proceed into gently grabbing the collar then treating. This is something that should be practiced often as you do not want the dog to be hand shy around the collar.

TIPS

- 🐾 If you are worried about the dog gaining weight from training treats. Reduce the amount of kibble fed at mealtime.
- 🐾 When working with these exercises, you can also rotate kibble as a treat once the dog is familiar with the exercises. This is a form of hand feeding and hand feeding also promotes bonding.

SEPARATION ANXIETY & OTHER FEAR-BASED ISSUES

TIPS TO PREVENT AND HELP CURE SEPARATION ANXIETY

- 🐾 IMPORTANT! - Do not spend the first weekend 24/7 with the dog and then leave Monday morning for work – please start leaving immediately for short periods
- 🐾 Make sure the dog is crate trained
- 🐾 Exercise the dog before you leave for long periods
- 🐾 Do not give dog attention 20 minutes before leaving
- 🐾 Start with leaving the dog for short sessions of 5-10 minutes and increasing gradually
- 🐾 Do not make a fuss about your going or coming, the dog can read your anxiety and it will filter down to him/her.
- 🐾 Keep radio or TV on when gone.
- 🐾 Switch up your departure routine, they know your habits and triggers
- 🐾 Use a Kong stuffed w/treats – peanut butter or frozen hot dogs, yogurt w/peanut butter, bananas & freeze. You can use multiple Kong's to occupy time
- 🐾 Give Melatonin (3mg tablets) 20 minutes before leaving

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR SEPARATION ANXIETY AND FEAR-BASED PHOBIAS

- 🐾 DAP Products – Female dogs secrete pheromones that comfort and reassure puppies. These pheromones have a similar calming effect on adult dogs. DAP products mimic these appeasement pheromones and help to reduce or eliminate stress in dogs of all ages. There are DAP electric diffusers (like an air freshener), sprays and collars. For more information see – www.dogappeasingpheromone.com/
- 🐾 Pressure Wraps – by using controlled pressure over a large area, pressure wraps help to calm a dog's sensory receptors. You can purchase a wrap or make your own using a t-shirt or an ace bandage.
 - Thundershirts – www.thundershirt.com
 - Anxiety Wrap – www.anxietywrap.com
 - Instructions for the TTouch Body Wrap – www.crvetcenter.com/bodywrap.htm
- 🐾 In extreme cases, locate a trainer/behaviorist at www.apdt.com or a Veterinarian at www.dacvb.org/resources/find/

DOG-DOG INTRODUCTIONS AND MULTI-PET HOUSEHOLDS

If you have resident pets please read “Introductions” by Jodi Marcus of Akita Rescue, Mid-Atlantic Coast. Jodi has worked with Akitas for many years, successfully integrating many foster, adopted dogs and cats. Her detailed instructions and insights are invaluable. This is required reading for anyone with resident pets—there will be a quiz!

[Click here for the full article on INTRODUCTIONS](#)

REMINDERS and TIPS:

- 🐾 Properly introducing dogs is time consuming and it requires work. Always keep in mind that a good introduction sets the stage for a lifetime relationship while a bad start can make enemies for life.
- 🐾 If your dog is not crate trained, train him before bringing in a new dog.
- 🐾 Know, accept and respect each dog’s individual personality.
- 🐾 You must be very vigilant and consistent in stopping unwanted behavior from either dog.
- 🐾 Use Melatonin to help dogs relax during the time of transition.
- 🐾 Never feed the dogs in the same room. They must be fed separately, and keep toys and bones separate (this can be for many months and sometimes it can be forever).
- 🐾 Allow only limited interaction for several weeks. Depending on the dog’s reactions, it can take a few weeks to a few months for dogs to settle in together. Puppies may meet the resident in 2-3 weeks, and adult dogs should not meet for at least 4-6 weeks.
- 🐾 Always supervise puppies less than six months of age, a bad interaction can make them very fearful.
- 🐾 Use crates and baby gates to keep dogs separated so they can get familiar with each other from a safe distance and always keep the new dog safely crated when you leave home.
- 🐾 Set the stage for success by making sure there is nothing for them to argue over. This means bones, treats, food, toys, chewies, food/water bowls, beds/blankets, tight spaces, and even your attention. Double check and make sure to look under and behind furniture, etc. This also goes for the yard—pick up anything they might want to possess.
- 🐾 When first letting them loose in the house, tether them. Keep dogs in same room with you but each dog is kept on its own tether so they cannot directly interact with each other or leave a leash on them in the event you need to separate them quickly.
- 🐾 Go on walks together as long as you have a person for each dog and keep the dogs at a safe distance from each other. If things are going well, slowly let them walk closer to each other.
- 🐾 Don’t get lazy, or overly confident and let a moment’s carelessness ruin months of work. Always (for the rest of their lives) monitor them for changes in attitude. One fight may make them enemies for life.

Constant monitoring is the price of having a multi-dog household. ~ Jodi Marcus

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ABOUT THE BREED

- 🐾 Akita Treasure of Japan by Barbara Bouyet. The most complete book about Akitas that you will ever find. This book covers all topics including health issues. If you don't already own a copy we highly recommend you order a copy at www.akitabook.com/
- 🐾 Akita Club of America – www.akitaclub.org

FOOD AND SUPPLEMENTS

- 🐾 Dog Food Analysis and Ratings
 - www.dogfoodanalysis.com - www.dogfoodadvisor.com - www.dogfoodproject.com
- 🐾 Raw Feeding –“Make it Easy For You and Your Dog" by Carina Beth MacDonald
- 🐾 Calming Supplements
 - Dog Appeasing Pheromone – www.dogappeasingpheromone.com
 - Rescue Remedy - www.rescueremedy.com
- 🐾 Supplements
 - www.monica-segal.com - www.b-naturals.com -

TRAINING/BEHAVIOR

- 🐾 Ian Dunbar on dog-friendly dog training – [Click here for video](#)
- 🐾 Digital Dog Training Textbook - www.dogstardaily.com/training
- 🐾 DogScouts USA - dogscouts.org/
- 🐾 Kiko Pup Videos - www.dogmantics.com/Dogmantics
- 🐾 The “Other End of the Leash” by Patricia McConnell. How your dog sees the world.
- 🐾 Other favorite authors – Ian Dunbar, Nicole Wilde, Paul Owens, Sophia Yin

MEDICAL

- 🐾 **BLOAT** – <http://www.a-love-of-rottweilers.com/canine-bloat.html>
- 🐾 **THYROID - HEMOPET** –Immune System and Thyroid Testing by Dr. Jean Dodds
 - Article on Canine Immune System:
 - www.siriusdog.com/canine-immune-system-disease-resistance.htm
 - Testing & Services - www.hemopet.org/services.html
 - PDF form - www.hemopet.org/files/TEST%20REQUEST%20FORMandTESTING%20DETAILS.pdf
- 🐾 **Vet Visits and Vaccinations** – reasons for wellness exams and food for thought regarding annual vaccinations – [click here for article](#)