



Training Playbook:

Daily Checklist and Time Stamps for Shelters

Introduction

Most businesses use written job descriptions when hiring and have manuals or operating procedures for orienting new employees. It is considered common practice in most industries, including animal welfare or animal services. However, after the employee is hired, he or she often files those documents away and rarely refers to them again. The fact of the matter is that the documents themselves are usually fairly broad, listing the basic duties the employee will be expected to perform regularly combined with duties the employee might never or only seldom perform.

Daily checklists or “time stamps,” on the other hand, provide the exact details of one’s duties with related timelines for deliverables. In shelters, having clearly laid-out expectations is key to effective sanitation and care, which ultimately leads to a healthier and happier animal population. This playbook outlines the steps an organization should take to develop and implement time stamps.

Time-Stamp Considerations and Needs

The following describes considerations and steps for creating a customized time stamp. Time stamps can be applied to any department, position, employee or group of employees.

As most of us know, scheduling is the act of planning activities so that a team can achieve their goals and priorities in the time they have available. When it’s done effectively, a schedule can help everyone:

- Understand what can realistically be achieved within the available time
- Make sure enough time has been allocated for essential tasks
- Allow time for the unexpected
- Avoid taking on more than a team member (or the team as a whole) can handle
- Work steadily toward achieving future goals (i.e. stay on track with things that are not daily tasks)

Keep these factors in mind as we walk through the steps of creating daily time stamps.

Step 1: Identify the employee or team for whom you are scheduling.

Step 2: Identify the available time that the employee or team has. For example: Dave is the animal care manager, and he and his team arrive at 8 a.m. and work until 5 p.m. So, you would create an hourly breakdown of their time from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Step 3: Schedule essential tasks first. Looking at Dave and his team’s normal daily

routine, make sure that all essential tasks (those that are required daily, such as feeding) are blocked off first, at the actual times that these functions are being performed.

Step 4: Schedule any other high-priority tasks. These tasks may not be as essential as those that are required daily, but they are still a priority when time permits. For Dave's team, animal enrichment might be a high priority, but not essential. For high-priority tasks, try to schedule them during the time of day when you or your team are most productive. Some people are at their most energized and efficient in the morning, while others focus more effectively in the afternoon or evening.

Step 5: Schedule some time to cope with contingencies and emergencies. Experience will tell you how much time to allow for each staff member or team. In general, the more unpredictable the job, the more contingency time you'll need to include. In Dave's case, his team is expected to handle pathway planning for cats who are owner surrenders. Since intake rates vary for his shelter, his manager has allotted one hour daily for two team members to perform this task. If the shelter has limited owner surrenders on a particular day, the time stamps refer the team members to a separate special project list that contains tasks that will fill the time but aren't as important as staying on top of the new intake processes.

Step 6: Examine the schedule as a whole and make any adjustments needed. If you reached step 5 and there's little or no time available for contingencies, go back through steps 2–4 and question whether all of the tasks you've entered in the schedule are absolutely necessary. It may be that some things can be better delegated or tackled in a more efficient way to save some time. Knowing the details about each task you are scheduling is essential, so ask for feedback from the team or individual team members.

Following these steps will help you put together an hour-by-hour schedule and the results should look like those provided below.

Sample Procedures and Program Information Documents

Now that you have a general understanding of time stamps, their purpose and how they are constructed, the following documents may act as templates as you implement them for your team or team members. Keep in mind that there is no exact or perfect form of implementation. These sample time stamps can be used as guidelines when creating your own.

If you need further assistance or clarification, please reach out to your [regional strategist, regional director or the Best Friends](#) national shelter support team at

[team2025@bestfriends.org.](mailto:team2025@bestfriends.org)

- Best Friends in Los Angeles: [Dog Team Time Stamps](#)
- Best Friends in Los Angeles: [Cat Team Time Stamps](#)