



Finding families for furry friends

If you've found a stray pet or have a pet that you or someone you know can no longer care for, there are ways to help that don't involve surrendering the animal to a shelter or humane society. The following tips can help you find the animal a loving, permanent home.

1. What to do when you've found a stray

PetFBI.org has a great "[Found Pet: Action Plan](#)" resource that describes how to identify the animal, report the animal to the correct agencies, and get the word out to find the pet's family.

2. If no family comes forward, spread the word

If you need to find a new home for a pet, advertise as widely as you can in as many places as possible. [Creating an "adopt me" flyer](#) is a great way to start. Describe the appearance, size, and age of the animal.

- Check out [Best Friends' tips for writing great pet profiles](#).
- Include the pet's name and a [good photograph](#) of the pet.
- If the pet is spayed, neutered or vaccinated, include that information.
- Describe the appealing qualities of the animal. Define any limitations the pet might have (for example, not good with cats or small children).
- Don't forget to include your phone number and email address

Read [these tips](#) for creating social media postings for pets and then post digital copies of your flyer to your social media accounts and ask friends and family members to share. Also make physical copies of the flyer and post them throughout your community. Prime posting spots are veterinarians' offices, pet supply stores and the workplaces of your family and friends. Places like health food stores, supermarkets, libraries, churches and health clubs often have community bulletin boards where anyone can post flyers.

OTHER WAYS TO SPREAD THE WORD

- Contact as many shelters and rescue groups as possible. Even though most of them are overloaded, ask permission to bring your pet to one of their adoption events and consider creating a courtesy posting on their web pages. They may be able to match you with someone looking for the kind of pet you are trying to place. You can find local shelters and rescue groups by searching the listings on Best Friends' [No More Homeless Pets Network](#) and [Petfinder.com](#)
- Contact breed rescue groups if you're trying to place a specific breed. Some of these groups might be willing to place a mix if the pet has the predominant characteristics of a certain breed. You can find breed rescue groups by doing an Internet search. Here's a sample search combination: Siamese + breed rescue + Montana.

- Place a classified ad in your local paper and run it as many times as you can afford. Consider asking for a token adoption fee, which will discourage people with unkind intentions. You can always donate the fee to a local animal rescue organization.
- Post your pet on adoption websites. There are general adoption websites, as well as specific sites for certain types of animals (for example, feline immunodeficiency (FIV)-positive cats, disabled pets or senior dogs). [Petfinder.com](#) and [Pet Bond.com](#) are good examples of general adoption websites. There are also online resources and phone apps like [Pawslikeme.com](#) designed to help place pets.
- Use all of your community contacts. Ask friends and family to mention the animal in their church or community newsletters. Send out an email about the pet through your office memo system. Post a notice and photo on your Facebook page, or share some flyers with members of clubs or associations to which you belong.
- Don't underestimate word-of-mouth. Tell anyone and everyone about the pet, and ask friends and family to help spread the word. You never know if your father's neighbor's daughter could be looking for just the pet you are trying to place.
- If you're trying to place a dog, take the dog on walks to pet supply stores or to the local park. Put a colorful bandana on the dog that says, "Adopt me."

3. If you need to rehome your pet

Everyone faces challenges in their lives that cause upheaval. Before you decide to rehome your pet, be sure you examine all your options.

- Does your pet have a serious medical condition that needs treatment? Be sure to check with different veterinarians about the cost and length of treatment. If you need financial assistance, check [these resources](#). Additionally, [CareCredit](#) offers low- and no-interest financing.
- If you are moving, check out [these options](#) for finding pet-friendly housing.
- If you have examined all the options and believe you must rehome your pet, check with family, friends and co-workers to see if they can take your pet or if they know of someone who might help. Make sure your pet is up to date on all vaccinations and medications. Compile a file with all medical records, and then follow the other steps in these resources to find that new home.

4. How to prepare the pet for adoption

Follow these tips from the [Humane Society of the United States](#).

5. How to screen potential adopters

When someone responds to your flyer or ad, you'll want to talk to them before introducing them to the animal. By doing so, you can eliminate unsuitable potential adopters early on. The following includes guidelines to help you find the best possible new home for your pet or rescued animal.

INTERVIEWING THE POTENTIAL ADOPTER

Schedule a phone conversation with the potential adopter and try to ask questions in a conversational style. While we would like all animals to have a perfect home, listen to the potential adopter with an open mind. It might help to read [Forget the Fairy Tale](#) and

More Acceptance for Open Adoption Policies. While both are written to help shelters, many of the tips also apply to individuals seeking homes for pets. Petfinder.com also has a list of [open-adoption guidelines](#) to help with the process. If you'd like examples of questions to ask the potential adopter, the [ASPCA](#) has some suggestions.

It's important to be honest with potential adopters and disclose any behavior challenges you've observed while caring for the pet. Food guarding, biting or destructive behavior may be the result of certain circumstances "in the moment." If you have questions, consult a qualified trainer before attempting to place the animal. These suggestions are for your protection, so that you don't incur any liability.

6. Meeting the potential adopter

Meeting on neutral ground is a good idea. A park could be a good place to arrange a first meeting. Wherever the meeting takes place, you will want to observe how potential adopters relate to the pet, and how the pet relates to them.

If you have doubts about a potential adopter, you can discuss the matter with the person or decide not to make the animal available. It's fine to be concerned about your pet's well-being, and reasonable people will understand. To make a graceful exit without confrontation, you could mention that there are other people interested in seeing the pet, and that you will get back to them.

7. Finalizing the adoption

If you decide to proceed with the adoption, you may want to use a contract similar to [this one](#). A contract can be a safety net for both you and the adopter. Make two copies of the agreement for both of you to sign. Leave one with the adopter and take the other one with you.

When you give up the animal, collect an adoption fee and remember to hand over any medical and vaccination records, as well as any special food, bowls, toys or bedding. Once you have made a match, stay in touch. Call or text over the next several weeks to see how things are going. It's important to allow the adopter to form his or her own bond with the animal, so gradually taper off and let the new caregiver enjoy the pet.

FINAL WORDS OF ADVICE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

When you place a pet, creativity, persistence and a positive attitude are usually rewarded. Finding a home can take some time, but if you persevere you are sure to eventually find a new person for your pet. If you have a time limit and it expires with no home in sight, consider boarding the animal to buy some more time.

If you need additional information, here are some [other resources that might be helpful](#).

Best Friends, other animal rescue groups and many concerned individuals have used the process described here to rehome thousands of dogs and cats. So, if you feel discouraged, just remember — it can be done. People find new homes for pets every day. You can, too!

See also: [Finding a new home for a pet](#), [Finding a new home for a pit-bull-terrier-type dog](#), [Finding new homes for special needs pets](#), [What to do when you find a stray](#)