

## Re-Homing Your Dog

First call the breeder, rescue or person you got the dog from. Responsible breeders will take the dog back and/or assist you in placing it in a new home. Many rescues require in their contracts that the dog be returned to them no matter how much time has passed since the adoption. If you cannot return your dog, evaluate its potential. Dogs that are older, larger or have health or behavior issues take longer to find a home for- sometimes many months. Do you have that much time?

## Shelters

Animal shelters were meant to house stray, abused and neglected animals. They were not meant to house owner cast-offs. Dogs surrendered by their owners are not subject to “hold” times-the time set for strays to be re-claimed by their owners. Owner-surrenders may be euthanized at any time. Over-crowded shelters sometimes have to euthanize dogs that have been surrendered the same day they arrive.

True “no-kill” shelters are few and far between. They often operate at capacity and are very selective of the dogs they take in. There are often long wait lists and only dogs considered highly adoptable (healthy, well-mannered etc.) will be taken.

Rescues: may be breed or type specific or all breed

Rescues are often at capacity and are run by only a handful of volunteers. Dogs are fostered in someone’s home until they are adopted. Dogs are taken in based on available foster space.

If you can keep your dog until it can be placed, rescues and shelters may allow you to “foster” your own dog and/or post it on their website as a courtesy listing.

If you decide to place your dog yourself here are some tips.

1. Make a list of what would be important in the dog’s new home. Be realistic, no home will be completely perfect. What kind of people are you looking for and what will you be willing to compromise on. Once you know what you are looking for you can plan your search.
2. Have your dog neutered/spayed if it isn’t already. Have all medical work up to date (vaccinations) and a copy of your dog’s medical records.
3. Groom your dog. A clean dog is more appealing than a dirty one.
4. Set an adoption fee. A reasonable range may be \$75-\$150 depending on size, age, health, breed, etc. Someone who is unwilling to pay an adoption fee or complain that it is too high is less likely to spend money for minor illness or injury. Never advertise “free to good home”.
5. Advertise! Use newspaper classifieds, posters/fliers, and websites. Rescue groups may allow you to post a courtesy listing on their website and owners can post classifieds on Petfinder as well.
6. Screen all potential adopters. You want to find a good home for your dog, not just the first offer. There are people out there who look for cheap dogs for dog-fighting (as fighters or “bait-dogs) or to sell to brokers to be sold to labs for research. Puppy mill breeders look for cheap, purebred, unaltered dogs to add to their “stock”.

Ask for name, address and phone number. Ask for information that you can verify. Make sure all people in the home agree to the new dog coming into their home. Make sure landlords allow pets, especially those of your dog's size/breed. Confirm this with the landlord.

Get references including the phone number of their vet if they have or have had other pets and three or more personal references. Call those references explaining that the person is interested in adopting your dog and you are calling to verify proper care, annual vaccinations and monthly heartworm preventative.

7. Once you find good candidates, make arrangements for them to meet the dog and for you to see their home.

Explain that the dog will go through an adjustment period as he gets to know them, learns the new rules and mourns the loss of his old family. Most dogs take a few days, others take longer. During the adjustment period, avoid anything stressful including baths, obedience classes, meeting too many strangers at once, etc. Some dogs won't eat for the first day or two. House-broken dogs may have a few accidents as they adjust to the new schedule and the new family learns their "I need to go out" cues.

8. Sign an adoption contract. This will protect the dog and a waiver of liability will protect you from anything your dog may do in the future, provided you have not lied or misrepresented your dog. Keep a copy for yourself. Tell the family to call if it doesn't work out. Let them know you would like to keep in touch and will call in a few days to make sure everything is okay. Tell them to call if they have questions or problems. Be willing to take the dog back if things don't work out as expected.