

# Dog Adoption Guide: The Dos and Don'ts of Adopting a Dog

Originally Published on [www.TriPets.org](http://www.TriPets.org)

Adopting a dog is a smart move for most people.

Assuming you can afford pet supplies and vet visits, you'll benefit from a new furry friend.

Dog adoption is a complex subject with many questions attached. The most common ones are listed below.

If you're ready to adopt a dog -- or at least exploring the possibility -- click the question that's on your mind for a detailed answer.

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## Why adopt a dog?

Dogs are angels in disguise.

Why else would "dog" be "God" spelled backwards?

People can find a million different reasons to hate each other.

Dogs don't care about politics, religion, or anything that divides us.

Republican? Democrat? Independent? Christian? Muslim? Buddhist?

It doesn't matter to a dog. They love you regardless of your belief system.

Dogs only care about one thing: being the best boy or girl they can possibly be.

When you're at work or school, they miss you. They eagerly await your return all day.

Whether you're gone for ten minutes or ten days, their reaction is always the same.

You're greeted with a tail-wagging frenzy that says: "Hooray! My human is back."

Dogs seem to have a sixth sense. They know when you're feeling sad or sick.

While you lay in bed or sit on the couch, they'll rest their head on your lap.

The suffering doesn't go away, but it feels less painful with a good dog.

Dogs are easy to please. A belly rub is enough to make them happy.

In time, you'll learn to appreciate the little things in life like dogs do.

## Who should adopt a dog?

Anyone can benefit from adopting a dog.

Here are some common examples to illustrate.

Loneliness is becoming a big problem due to the pandemic.

Live alone and can't visit friends or relatives safely? You know what I mean.

A lot of folks know the feeling, which is why some [animal shelters are running out of dogs](#).

Later, we'll get into the mental health benefits of adopting a dog. It's a good thing, I promise.

Every child in the world has asked the question: "Can we adopt a dog?" If your kid asks, consider it.

Responsibility is a wonderful principle. But it's hard to teach unless theory is accompanied by action.

Feeding, walking, bathing, and caring for a dog will show your son or daughter [how to be more responsible](#).

If you have an only child who's being homeschooled due to the pandemic, they'd feel better with a new playmate.

[Seniors often experience](#) better memory recall and a heightened ability to live in the present when they have a dog.

Dogs help them focus on something besides their aches, pains, physical limitations, and other consequences of aging.

Single man? A dog could help you [get more dates](#). Take good care of Fido, because women care about how you treat them.

You'll also have a buddy who can ride shotgun -- the Sam to your Dean (Supernatural fans get it) -- and join you on adventures.

Dog adoption benefits couples, too. There's less pressure for one partner to fulfill every need when you have a furry family member.

Feeling connected is good. Expecting someone to be your single source of love and support is bad. No one can handle all that pressure.

It's good to have a dog at home, because they can comfort you on bad days. This is helpful when your partner's busy or struggling like you.

All of that said, dogs aren't objects. They're living beings. Don't expect them to solve all your problems. Care for them as much as they care for you.

## Where could I adopt a dog?

[The Humane Society](#) estimates there are 3,500 animal shelters and 10,000 rescue groups or sanctuaries in the United States.

It's easy to find the animal shelters and rescues in your hometown. Simply type "animal shelters" or "animal rescues" into Google.

Enter the phrase and then you'll see a map on top of the result page, which will highlight the animal shelters and rescues near you.

Most animal shelters have a website and Facebook page, which should contain a list of rescue dogs currently available for adoption.

Want to streamline the process? There are three major pet adoption websites to use: [Petfinder](#), [Adopt a Pet](#), and [the Shelter Pet Project](#).

They all use a similar approach. After entering your zip code, they'll show you a list of every dog and cat available within a certain distance.

The listings might be incomplete. Some animal shelters don't use these websites. Others forget to delete a dog's profile after they're adopted.

This issue is what led me to create [Tri Pets](#) -- a local pet adoption website for my hometown of Kingsport, TN -- approximately eight months ago.

Live in Kingsport? Simply visit the [dog](#) and [cat](#) directories. I do my best to keep them current. Live somewhere else? Follow the steps outlined above.

Determined to find a certain type of dog? It'd be easier to use a pet adoption website. Breed flexible? I encourage you to support your local animal shelter.

If you run an animal rescue or shelter and want a modern website that boosts pet adoptions in a big way, feel free to contact me for details (note the bio at the end).

## What kind of dog should I adopt?

It's important to understand the needs, activity level, and personality type of a dog breed before you choose to adopt one.

Calm dog breeds include Great Danes, Great Pyrenees, Basset Hounds, Shih Tzus, and Pugs. See a more extensive list [here](#).

High energy dog breeds include [Pit Bulls](#), Boxers, Dachshunds, Australian Shepherds, Border Collies, and Poodles. See more [here](#).

If you're unable to walk your dog on a daily basis -- or don't have a fenced-in yard where they can play -- don't adopt a Border Collie.

If you want a dog to take on hikes and runs -- or have children who hope to play with the dog -- then a Great Pyrenees isn't your best bet.

Rescue dogs are often returned to the shelter, because their activity needs aren't being met, which can lead to destructive behavior in your home.

Here are more [signs your dog isn't getting enough exercise](#): rough play, restlessness, excessive barking, pulling the leash, and pestering or annoying behavior.

That said, you can adopt an energetic dog without being a fitness buff. But you must be willing to take them to a dog park so they can work off their excess energy.

Invest in a ball or frisbee and let your dog do all the running. Even if they're not interested in fetch, they'll have the freedom to do some [zoomies](#), and behave better as a result.

For best results, let your dog exercise early in the morning. This is especially useful when you're away for a lot of the day. Hopefully you won't return to a disaster area after work.

No matter what type of dog you adopt, understand all dogs need attention to thrive. Include them in your daily activities so they feel loved and appreciated. Pet them for at least 10-20 minutes everyday.

## Why adopt a shelter or rescue dog?

Opening your home to a shelter or rescue dog is a heroic move.

670,000 dogs are euthanized every year, [according to the ASPCA](#).

Shelter and rescue dogs are smart enough to know you saved them.

They'll repay you in love and loyalty for the rest of their lives. I know it's true.

[I rescued a dog named Dixie](#) many years ago and she was a constant companion.

Despite walking over a hundred shelter dogs, I've never seen a dog as clingy as Dixie.

Rescuing one dog impacts the lives of other dogs. Animal shelters often struggle for space.

If there's not enough room to intake new dogs, the shelter's staff could be forced to euthanize.

They can't legally say, "No," when members of the community ask them to accept another animal.

Rescue and shelter dogs are rarely returned because they were bad, misbehaved, or flawed in any way.

Most dogs are brought to the shelter because of inconvenience or personal problems in their owner's life.

[According to a survey](#) by the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy, dogs are returned due to:

- 1 Moving to a new home and can't bring pet (7%)
2. Landlord doesn't allow pets in the home (6%)

3. Can't afford cost of pet maintenance (5%)
4. Too busy to give a pet attention (4%)
5. Too many animals in the home (4%)
6. Owner has personal problems (4%)
7. Lack of necessary facilities (4%)
8. Illnesses and/or diseases (4%)
9. No room for litter mates (3%)
10. The pet bit someone (3%)

Do you see what the top ten reasons have in common? Nine out of ten aren't the dog's fault. And yet they suffer.

The same is often true for bites. [If a dog bites somebody](#), it's usually because they feel threatened or uncomfortable.

And the dog typically issues warnings, in the form of growls and a stern expression, before they resort to canine violence.

Adopting a rescue or shelter dog is a form of compassion. You're giving a good boy or girl a valuable second chance at life.

## **Should I adopt a puppy or senior dog?**

Senior dogs usually have a sad story.

Their owner might have died or got placed in a nursing home.

And the owner's family probably wasn't interested in taking care of their dog.

It's confusing to end up in a shelter when you've been treated like royalty in the same home for many years.

[A dog's lifespan](#) depends on their size. Small dogs live 15-16 years. Medium dogs live 10-13 years. Giant dogs live 7-8 years.

Why? No idea. Not a scientist. Regardless of the specifics, every senior dog deserves to live their twilight years in a comfortable home.

Animal shelters can be chaotic and confusing. The barking never stops. There's no couches to lay on. You get attention, but only for a few minutes.

It's rough for younger dogs, too. But they have a lot of years left. A few weeks or months after being adopted, they'll get spoiled and forget the shelter ever existed.

Elderly dogs don't have it so lucky. Their clock is ticking. I believe they deserve the highest priority, because it'd be horrible for them to pass away in a stressful place.

Not writing an essay about puppies since they have it easy in comparison. I've walked roughly 120 dogs from my local shelter. Guess how many were puppies? Zero.

If a puppy goes to the animal shelter on Monday, they'll be adopted by Tuesday morning. Puppies find a home in 24 hours or less every single time.

Why are people obsessed with puppies? They're small, cute, childlike, and come with a clean slate. None of these are good reasons to adopt.

If you see a dog as nothing more than an adorable source of amusement, you don't deserve that dog and should surrender them.

Puppy-crazed people will typically take the dog to a shelter when they grow, get older, and lose the "aw how sweet" factor.

Even worse, some of them will immediately buy another puppy, without any care or concern for [pet overpopulation](#).

This issue enables [puppy mills and backyard breeders](#), who often treat their dogs like prisoners of war.

Don't adopt a puppy unless you found them at an animal shelter or rescue organization.

## **What are the costs of adopting a dog?**

The first expense to expect is an adoption fee.

Petworks, the animal shelter in my hometown, [charges \\$50-70](#).

If a dog is spayed or neutered, you pay \$60. Seniors cost \$50. Otherwise, the fee is \$70.

Dog adoption fees vary at other shelters and rescues. The cost could be [anywhere from \\$50 to \\$350](#).

This typically covers spay/neuter, microchip, and vaccines for conditions such as rabies and distemper.

Verify the specifics, because you might need to invest in additional treatments with your [local veterinarian](#).

Second, you'll need to buy pet supplies. Here are the essentials, plus a link to the top rated option on [Chewy](#).\*

[-Dog Bed](#)

[-Dog Food](#)

[-Chew Toy](#)

[-Dog Crate](#)

[-Dog Collar](#)

[-Dog Brush](#)

[-Dog Leash](#)

[-Dog Treats](#)

[-Dog Harness](#)

[-Food and Water Bowl](#)

[-Heartworm Prevention](#)

[-Flea and Tick Prevention](#)

\*FYI: if you make a purchase at Chewy, I'll earn a small cut. Thanks for helping me cover the cost of running this website.

Third, you might be interested in hiring a pet care service provider at some point in your dog's life. Let's discuss some examples.

If you ever take a cruise or flight and have to leave Fido at home, you'll need a pet sitter or dog boarder. Either one would be fine.

Most [dog boarders](#) charge \$30-50 per night. Expect to pay \$25 at a minimum and \$85 at a maximum. Multiply by the duration of your stay.

Most [pet sitters](#) charge \$10-25 per hour. If you're worried about your dog being lonely and bored in a kennel, this option provides more freedom.

[Common behavioral issues in dogs](#) include digging, jumping, barking, whining, humping, food guarding, destructive chewing, and separation anxiety.

Behavior problems are rarely a big deal. At times, they can be a major stress source. If your dog's behavior is unacceptable, consider tagging in an expert.

Most [dog trainers](#) charge \$30-80 per class. Dog obedience training schools cost \$200-600 per week. Training a dog for support or therapy is more expensive.

Lastly, you should consider pet insurance. [Pawlicy Advisor](#) is vet-recommended and can identify the most affordable insurance for your dog. It's a great service.

[Veterinarian costs](#) like routine check-ups aren't bad. Other procedures like a torn knee cartilage can cost \$1,500-3,000. Want to play it safe? Get your dog insured.

I don't want financial concerns to scare you out of adopting a dog. But I also want you to be aware of the costs involved. Do your best to budget for all of these areas.

## What are the benefits of adopting a dog?

Dog owners are scientifically proven to be happier and healthier than people who don't own a dog.

[According to a recent study](#), dog owners walk an extra 22 minutes -- approximately a mile -- per day.

Despite the tendency of dogs to stop and sniff everything in their path, the walks were done at a moderate pace.

Moderate exercise [reduces your risk](#) of cancer, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, muscle atrophy, and cognitive decline.

We all know physical activity is beneficial, but running or getting sweaty at the gym makes many people feel uncomfortable.

Owning a dog is a life hack, because working out ceases to be a "miserable bore" and becomes a "fun way to bond with Fido."

The dog's enthusiasm will rub off on you. You'll be so focused on their enjoyment that you forget the fact you're exercising at all.

Dogs can be an [effective antidepressant](#). A common cause of depression is a lack of purpose, which makes life feel meaningless.

Purpose isn't all about selfish desires.... it should be a form of service. Feeding and carrying for a furry family member fits the bill.

Social isolation also leads to depression. Having a dog helps. When people see you walking one, they're [more likely to start a conversation](#).

Depressed people are often lonely. Loneliness doesn't seem as bad when you have a dog by your side. A sweet shadow that follows you everywhere.

Lastly, petting a dog for ten minutes can reduce your stress and anxiety to a significant extent, [according to a recent study from Washington State University](#).

If such a powerful effect can be achieved in ten minutes, how beneficial must dogs be for your mental health in the long-term? I'm definitely convinced. Are you?

## **How do I adopt a shelter or rescue dog?**

First, identify a few [dog breeds that fit your needs](#).

Second, visit local animal shelter and rescue websites or Facebook pages.

Third, search for the type of dog you want on the main [pet adoption websites](#).

Fourth, contact the shelter or rescue and ask how to begin the adoption process.

Due to the pandemic, you might be expected to schedule an appointment before you visit.

Fifth, invest in the necessary [pet supplies](#), which should be in place before you bring a dog home.

This is the short version. The long version includes more context you need to know for a successful dog adoption.

At times, rescue dogs are returned to the shelter because of behavioral issues like the ones discussed in the previous section.

Be ready for challenges like hyperactivity and separation anxiety. On bad days, these issues can cause your dog to act like a fool.

If you commit to a partner and they have a bad day, would you leave them? No. You'd support them. It's part of the job description.

If you have a child and they make a mess, would you put them in a foster home? No. That would be mean and cold-hearted. You'd deal with it.

If your new dog has difficulties, treat them with the same compassion. They will learn the rules of your home (as long as you make an effort to teach them).

Most behavior problems naturally solve themselves in time. Rescue dogs tend to be sad, hurt, and confused. The person they loved took them to a scary place.

Then you come along and take them to a comfortable home. Your habits, routines, and schedule are different than the shelter's. Their past owner was different, too.

It's also worth noting some dogs were abused and neglected. In that case, a dog might act standoffish at first. Give them time and show them you're not like that.

Most shelter dogs require a [decompression period](#). Like a child going to a new school where they don't know anybody, the dog adjusts to a new environment.

Expect this period to last a week or two. To speed up the process, decide on the house rules before your dog arrives. This will reduce stress and confusion.

Is your dog allowed in every room? If not, set up gates and barriers to make this crystal clear. Place toys and a comfy dog bed in their living space.

Is your dog allowed on furniture? If not, enforce this standard from the start. Lead the dog to an allowed area, give them a treat, and pet them.

Any dog hates it when you're not at home. An abandoned dog will hate it even more. They might worry you'll never come back and panic.

To keep your dog safe, put them in a crate when you leave. Give them an [active toy or puzzle game](#) to occupy their mind.

During the first week, try not to be gone long. If you're laid off or working remotely due to COVID, this won't be hard.

When your dog knows you'll always come back, it's okay to extend your absences and see how they do loose.

House training is a common struggle. Even housetrained dogs might have an accident while you're away.

Don't scold your dog, especially if you didn't catch them in the act. They won't know why you're yelling.

Take them outside often. Every time they go potty, reward them with treats and heaps of praise.

If you need more help with housetraining, [here's an extensive how-to-guide on the topic](#).

## **Can I adopt a dog for free or without a home visit?**

Animal shelters and rescues charge an adoption fee for dogs.

This is necessary, because they can't care for animals without an income source.

Adoption fees are also used to ensure you have the means to provide for a new dog.

If you can't afford the fee, why should they believe you can afford to feed or care for a dog?

That said, financial problems are temporary. And it's easy to relate with them in the current economy.

Most shelters offer a "foster-to-adopt" program. You know how Netflix has a free trial? It's the same concept.

The dog wins, because they're in a better atmosphere. The shelter wins, because they have more space for homeless animals.

You win, because this buys time to save money. It's also smart to do a test run (confirm you and the rescue dog are compatible).

Some people serve as [dog fosters](#) exclusively. They open their homes to different rescue dogs and care for them until an adoption is arranged.

As a result, they make a positive impact in the lives of many dogs. It's a fun and fulfilling experience. This is exactly why I [walk shelter dogs](#) every week.

[Home visits](#) are a common part of adopting a dog. It's impossible to provide a definite answer, because the rules and procedures vary from shelter to shelter.

Assuming you're a good person, they're not a cause for concern. The only goal? Verify the dog will be safe and healthy in your home. No reason to dread them!

Here's the hardest part. Some dogs are escape artists. If your dog will be in a yard, you'll need to look for vulnerabilities. Can they dig under or jump over the fence?

A few months ago, I published an article about why dogs run away (and how to prevent it). [Click here](#) to open it in a new tab. Apply the advice before your home visit.

What happens if shelter staff finds an escape route or safety hazard? They'll ask you to resolve the issue within a certain timeframe. As long as you can afford it, they'll let you keep the dog.

## **Should I adopt a dog with a disease or special needs?**

Caring for a dog with special needs is rewarding.

But you need to be realistic about your budget and availability.

[Deaf and blind dogs](#) require you to think about training in a totally different way.

Dogs with rare diseases or health conditions require you to become an expert in how they're treated.

Before you adopt a dog with special needs, research and consult a veterinarian about what would be involved.

[Diabetic dogs](#) need daily injections. [Incontinent dogs](#) need diaper changes. [Paralyzed dogs](#) need physical therapy.

If you're raising children while working a full-time job and/or going to school, I doubt you could handle this responsibility.

Caring for a special needs dog is a part-time job by itself. Confirm you can perform the duties before you make a final decision.

There's a woman in my neighborhood who walks a crippled Collie every day. He has little wheels to help him walk by himself.

She also pushes a stroller, because he gets tired fast. At that point, she transfers him to the stroller and they keep going.

This lady is my hero. I admire her dedication to this dog. And I applaud her for giving him such a happy life.

Bear in mind she's a retired senior with an empty nest. In other words, the dog is her whole life.

This is the mindset you'll need to succeed as a caregiver for dogs with special needs.

Challenge accepted? Go for it. Otherwise, you should reconsider.

## **Where can I adopt a dog that's good with cats or kids?**

Want a dog that gets along with cats and children? No problem.

Any animal shelter is happy to do a cat test and kid test on your behalf.

In fact, they've probably already done one, and made this information available.

Shelters analyze the temperament of dogs to make the adoption process more convenient.

Their staff could give you a list of which rescue dogs are cat and kid friendly. All you have to do is ask.

To be safe, you can also schedule a meet-and-greet. Bring your child or feline and introduce them to the dog.

Most animal shelters have separate rooms dedicated to this purpose since many dogs behave differently in a kennel.

You could also foster the dog first. If they fit in, awesome. Adopt them. If they don't, oh well. At least they got a vacation.

# What's the difference between adopting a rescue dog and buying a dog from a breeder?

Dog breeders are known for unsanitary conditions and unethical practices.

They treat animals as if they're merely a "product" and produce them in mass.

If you buy a puppy from a breeder, you're supporting an immoral business model.

Animal shelters are known for compassionate care and serving their community's animals.

Without breeders and puppy mills, domestic pet overpopulation wouldn't be such a problem.

Most people replace one puppy with another when it reaches a certain age. It's a vicious cycle.

If you adopt a dog from a shelter, you're not just saving one animal's life. It's much bigger than that.

You gave the shelter space to save another dog. They could have been euthanized without your decision.

You're also shutting down a corrupt business practice, which should be outlawed at the state and federal level.

Annually, [three million innocent shelter dogs die](#). The only reason? Shelters don't have enough room for all of them.

Meanwhile, two million puppies are sold by breeders. Why make more dogs when existing dogs need help so desperately?

One million deaths is still too many, so don't forget to [spay and neuter](#). Adopt your dog from an animal shelter. You won't regret it.

**Thanks for reading the Dog Adoption Guide. I definitely appreciate your time.**

Do you think one of your friends or relatives might want to adopt a dog? If so, share this guide on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Feel free to bookmark for future reference.

Dog Adoption Guide: Dos and Don'ts of Adopting a Dog by Daniel "Dogfather" Wallen

Original Published on [www.TriPets.org](http://www.TriPets.org)

# Meet the Author



[Daniel Wallen](#) has found homes for more than a hundred shelter dogs.

Wallen will tell their stories in a heartwarming book titled: "Shelter Dog Stories: Tail-Wagging Tales of Love and Loyalty."

Interested? [Send a friend request](#). You'll be the first to know when it's available (and see the cute dogs he shares every week).

Daniel also designs websites for veterinarians, dog groomers, dog trainers, pet sitters, pet photographers, and other pet care service providers. Sound helpful? [Click here](#).