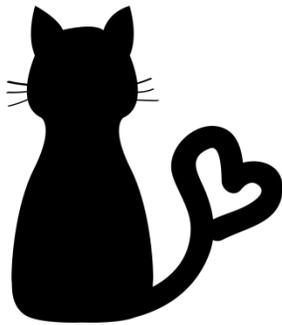




## FINDING A NEW HOME

### WHY YOU ARE YOUR PET'S BEST RESOURCE

Believe it or not, **you are your pet's best option for finding a new home.** Some people think shelters or rescue groups would be best for placing your pet because we have experience, facilities, screening guidelines, etc. However, an individual, particularly one who knows the animal, can focus all their efforts on that pet, provide the most



information to prospective adopters and best determine the appropriateness of a new home. Also, shelters are stressful for animals. The shelter setting, no matter how nice, can bring on stress-related problems. Anxiety, aggression, and even illness are common, and these natural reactions may make adoption difficult or impossible.

If you decide that you do need to re-home your pet, we want to help you become your pet's best advocate for finding a home. You can follow the guidelines below to maximize your search efforts and help your pet make a smooth transition into their new home. Keep in mind that finding the right person or family for your pet may take some time and effort, but your patience and hard work will pay off in the end.

\*\*Some people are hesitant to publicize information about their pet because they fear that people who would treat the pet unkindly will respond. Remember, you are in control of where your pet is placed. Don't be afraid to ask for references and follow up on them.

### PREPARE THE ANIMAL FOR ADOPTION

To increase the chances of finding a home and the success of the new placement, it is important that your pet is:

- Spayed or neutered
- In good health
- Clean and groomed
- Reasonably well behaved, especially housebroken



It's a good idea to print your pet's veterinary records and keep them handy so that you can give them to the new pet parent.

If your pet isn't spayed or neutered, please have it done. We don't recommend placing an animal who has not been spayed/neutered into a new home. Doing so can result in unwanted litters, and neutered animals are less likely to show undesirable mating behaviors, such as mounting or howling. Puppies and kittens as young as eight weeks old can be spayed/neutered. For more information, talk to your veterinarian or our spay/neuter clinic.

### HOW TO WRITE AN ADOPTION AD



**Photos and descriptions** really help people make a connection to an animal. Take several good-quality digital photos of your pet. Make sure your pet is well-groomed, is looking at the camera, and can be seen clearly in the photos. Focus on illustrating your pet's most adorable qualities or favorite activities (for example: if your pet loves playing fetch, take a picture of them with their favorite ball). If you don't have a digital camera, use a cell phone camera or whatever you have available.

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**Compose an ad** that describes the pet's personality, habits, and some of the little things that make this animal special. Do not hold back when it comes to telling about any disabilities, health issues or behavior quirks. Sometimes these are the things that potential adopters particularly respond to. For some tips on how to write an appealing ad, read [How to Write Pet Profiles](#).

**Provide detailed information** in your write up. Explain why your pet needs a new home, describe what kind of home would be best for them, and outline their likes and dislikes. Be sure to list your favorite things about them. Mention the most entertaining and endearing aspects of their personality. Be creative! It might help to write from the animal's perspective: "Hi, my name is Daisy and I need a new home! I'm a lively Boston Terrier mix who loves playing tug and cuddling with oversized stuffed animals. I don't get along well with cats—but I adore kids..."

**Charge a fee**, unless you're placing your pet with a friend or relative. Doing so is likely to discourage anyone with malicious intentions. If an individual wants to adopt your pet for the right reasons, a nominal fee should not deter him or her. If you like, you can ask the person to make out the check to a local animal shelter. In addition to assuring yourself that you've chosen a good adoptive home for your pet, you'll help other animals who need new homes.

## ADVERTISE WIDELY

Get the word out, in as many places as possible, to increase the chances of success in finding a new home.

- **Flyers** are inexpensive to produce and often highly effective, especially when they include a good photo and lively description of the animal. They work especially well for older animals or animals with special needs. At [www.petbond.com](http://www.petbond.com), you can combine a photo of your pet and the adoption ad into a flyer by following the simple instructions. Plug in your contact information and the adoption ad, and upload a photo, and you'll have a very attractive flyer. You can save it as a digital file, which can be attached to emails and used for posting on social media websites, and you can also printout hard copies for posting around town. Post the flyers throughout your community, wherever a good prospective adoptive person may see it. Health food stores, supermarkets, libraries, churches, health clubs, veterinarian's offices, pet stores, dog daycares, boarding facilities, grooming salons, and sporting goods stores are just a few examples of good places to post flyers.
- Posting the description and photo of the pet on **adoption websites** is another effective way to find a new home. There are specific sites for certain types of animals (FIV+ cats, disabled pets, senior dogs, etc.) as well as general adoption websites, such as [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com). Post the flyer or information about your pet on social media sites, such as Facebook. Ask friends and family members to do the same.
- To find a home for a dog of a particular breed or breed mix, look for a **breed rescue group** with whom you could list the dog. (On the Internet, search for "breed rescue," where "breed" is the name of the particular breed.) Many of these groups will allow you to post your dog's picture on their website. Some may even offer to provide a foster home. Follow this link for the American Kennel Club's list of breed rescue groups: <http://www.akc.org/breeds/rescue.cfm>.
- Contact all rescue groups to see if they will offer **courtesy postings on their websites**, or allow you to bring the animal to one of their adoption events.
- Use **word of mouth and community contacts**. Word of mouth should not be underestimated. Tell anyone and everyone about the pet that needs a home and ask friends, co-workers and family members to help with spreading the word. It could be that a co-worker's father's neighbor's daughter is looking for a new pet.





- **Ask people you know** to mention the animal in their church's newsletter, send an e-mail about the pet through their office memo system, or share some flyers with the members of their book club.
- **Get the pet out there!** (This works especially well with dogs.) The more the pet is out and about, interacting with people, the more likely he'll charm the right person. You can even put a colorful bandana or sign on them that says "Adopt me" or "Looking for a home." Take them on walks, to pet supply stores, to the local park. Go to outdoor cafés, parks where people walk dogs, and other areas with high foot traffic. Check with your local shelter to see if they have off-site adoption days; if so, they might let you bring your pet.
- **E-mail everyone** you know and ask them to forward your message to their friends and family.
- **Specialized advertising** reaches out to a particular community that is most likely to offer an appropriate home for a pet. For instance, an active animal will need an active home, so flyers could be placed in outdoor sporting goods stores, gyms, etc. An older animal may prefer a quieter home with a mature owner, so an ad posted in the local senior newsletter might yield good results.



**Be creative, positive and persistent.** There are many animals needing homes at any one time, so finding a home can take some work, but, there are good homes out there, so try to maintain a positive attitude. Explore all options you can think of for finding a home - creativity and persistence are usually rewarded.

### CHOOSING THE RIGHT NEW HOME

When an interested party contacts you about your pet, the first step is to conduct a thorough **telephone interview**. Ask many questions, including the following:

- Why are you interested in my pet? What specifically attracts you to her?
- Where will the pet live during the day?
- Where will the pet sleep at night?
- What kind of activities do you want to do with the pet? Do you plan on training them? If so, how?
- Where will you take the pet for veterinary care?
- Do you have any other pets? Do you have a family or roommates living with you?
- Have you ever had a pet before? If so, what happened to him or her? You can also ask to see veterinary records for previous pets to verify that they received proper care.
- What would you do if you had to give up the pet for some reason in the future? Let the prospective adopter know if you're willing to take your pet back in the event that things don't work out.



If you're satisfied with the prospective adopter's answers to your questions, you can move on to the next stage in the re-homing process:

### Arrange a meeting

The person should visit you and your pet at your home, meet you somewhere in public, or invite you to visit his or her home. It's important to see how the person interacts with your pet—and how your pet reacts to him or her. Does your pet seem to like the person? If a family is interested in adopting your pet, does your pet seem to like everyone in the family, including any young children?



### **Ask for the landlord's contact information**

If the prospective adopter rents a house or apartment, it's a good idea to verify that he or she has permission to keep a pet.

### **Get references**

Ask for written or verbal references from the person's friends, neighbors and, if possible, a veterinarian. Do these individuals readily claim that the person will be a responsible and loving pet parent?

### **Be sure to carefully evaluate all potential new homes.**

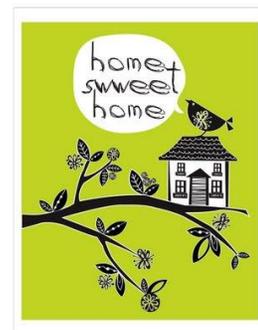
If you feel uncertain about someone who's interested in adopting your pet, trust your gut. Wait for the right person to come along.

## **THE TRANSITION**

Moving to a brand new home can be very stressful for a pet. The following tips will help make the change as easy as possible for everyone:

Though it's not feasible in every situation, it's ideal to give your pet opportunities to get to know the person who's adopting her. If possible, follow the steps below to help your pet ease into her new life. After completing each step, it's best to wait at least a few days before moving on to the next one.

- Take your pet to visit the adopter at least once or twice. Spend some time playing or just relaxing in your pet's new home.
- After a visit or two together, let your pet spend some quality time alone with their new person. Drop off your pet at the adopter's house for a few hours. When you return to pick up your pet, avoid a big, excited greeting. It's fine to pet them calmly, but you want them to think that visiting their new friend is the part that's wonderful and exciting—not being reunited with you afterward.
- Next, arrange a sleepover. Instead of leaving your pet with the adopter for only a few hours, let the pet spend the night with their potential new owner. Return the next morning to pick up your pet.
- After spending night with the adopter, try leaving your pet in their new home for an entire weekend.
- When your pet has had time to make friends with the adopter and seems comfortable spending time in their new home, they're ready to make a permanent transition.
- When it's time for your pet to join their new pet parent, make the hand-off as uneventful as possible. Your pet may feel more anxious if parting with you is a long, drawn-out process and you're obviously distressed. For their sake, try to remain calm and upbeat—even if you're sad about having to say good-bye.
- Give the adopter all of your pet's toys, their favorite treats and their bed or crate. The presence of familiar things and smells might help them feel more comfortable in their new home.
- Send your pet to their new home with enough of their regular food to last for at least a week. Abruptly changing to a new food can upset a pet's stomach and sometimes causes diarrhea. If your pet's new parent wants to feed them a different kind of food, the switch should be made gradually to avoid stomach problems.



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- Ask the adopter if you may call in a few weeks to follow-up. Finding out how your pet is adjusting will ease your mind, and your pet's new parent should be happy to give you a quick report. However, it will be easiest on your pet if you resist going to visit. They need to learn that their new home is permanent.

## WHAT NOT TO DO

**Do not take your pet to a neighborhood, wooded area or park and “set her free.”** Domestic animals are very different from their wild ancestors and can't fend for themselves. If left alone, they may starve to death, encounter dangerous predators or get hit by a motor vehicle. If you can't re-home your pet for some reason, please take them to a local humane society or animal shelter.

**Do not re-home your pet or relinquish them to a shelter without disclosing all relevant information about their behavior.** For example, failing to tell a prospective adopter or a shelter that your dog has an aggression problem—especially if she has bitten someone in the past—can endanger well-meaning people who are just trying to do the right thing by adopting a dog.

## MILITARY PETS

Members of the military may or may not be able to take their pets with them on overseas deployment. Be sure to check with your commander about housing arrangements in your new posting. The base veterinarian can help determine whether your pet will need vaccines or other care prior to moving. There is a wealth of information about transporting pets, quarantine rules in various countries, and other tips on [PetTravel.com](http://PetTravel.com). A specific [link](#) on the site addresses all the specifics of taking your pet with you if you are assigned a PCS (permanent change of station).



If you are unable to take your pet with you on assignment, then consider the length of time you'll be gone, and decide whether foster care or permanent rehoming would be the best option for your pet.

## Finding a foster home for your pet

If you decide on fostering, check with relatives, friends, and others on or near your base to see if anyone is willing to foster your pet. Use every means at your disposal: Facebook pages, base bulletin boards, church bulletins. If you are trying to place a cat with a foster family, check with [Operation Noble Foster](#). Other groups to contact for pet fostering: [Guardian Angels for Soldier's Pet](#)  
[Sugarland Ranch](#)

We recommend that you create a foster care agreement for your pet. With a formal agreement in place, everyone involved knows what the expected level of care is for your pet. You can access a sample agreement on the [HSUS website](#).

## Rehoming your pet

If you need to re-home your pet permanently, we recommend that you make every effort to place your cat or dog directly into a new home. Please see tips and resources above.



## SPECIAL NEEDS PETS

There are also some websites specifically for special-needs pets, and on a few of them you can post adoption information.

- Special-needs cats and dogs: [www.SpecialneedsPets.org](http://www.SpecialneedsPets.org)
- Blind dogs: <http://www.blinddogs.com/>
- Deaf dogs: <http://www.deafdogs.org/>
- Senior dogs: <http://www.srdogs.com>

You can also post messages on the following Yahoo groups:

- Senior cats: <http://Pets.Groups.Yahoo.com/group/SeniorCatRescue>
- Disabled cats: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/disabled-cats-rescue/>
- Senior and special-needs dogs: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SaSNDR/>
- Senior dogs: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SeniorDogRescue/>
- Senior dogs: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OldDogsRescue/>



Some people are hesitant to publicize information about their pets because they fear that people who would treat the pet unkindly will respond. Remember, you are in control of your pet and where he or she is placed. Don't be afraid to ask for references and follow up on them.

**First and foremost, we recommend that all pet owners consult with their veterinarian. The information contained herein is meant to be a resource. It is not exhaustive, nor does it indicate an endorsement or recommendation from Charleston Animal Society. Please use your own due diligence in researching these sources and making the best choice for your pet(s).**

**We'd like to give thanks and credit to the following organizations, whose published resources were utilized in addition to staff research for this compilation:**

Nevada Humane Society [www.nevadahumanesociety.org](http://www.nevadahumanesociety.org)  
ASPCA [www.asPCA.org](http://www.asPCA.org)  
Best Friends Animal Society [www.bestfriends.org](http://www.bestfriends.org)  
Paws Like Me [www.pawslikeme.com](http://www.pawslikeme.com)

**If you still need assistance after reviewing the information on our website, please either email or call our Animal Resource Center at [help@charlestonanimalsociety.org](mailto:help@charlestonanimalsociety.org) or (843) 329-1554.**

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