

HUMANE SOCIETY OF INDIANAPOLIS

“How do I find a good home for my pet?”

If your pet is a purebred:

-contact breeder that you got animal from (on registration papers). Sometimes they are willing to take the pet back, or know of good options to pursue.

-consider breed rescue options. We have a listing of breed rescue organizations on our website. Remember that often breed rescue organizations are small, volunteer run organizations, so even if they are unable to actually take your dog into their care, they may have excellent options or a list of people interested in adopting the breed that they can pass along to you.

Make sure animal is up to date on vet needs if possible. If you can say the pet is up to date on shots and heartworm preventative, the pet will likely be easier to place. If the pet has any chronic or recurring medical issues, it is important to disclose those but if they are well controlled the pet will be easier to place.

Consider spaying/neutering pet if not already done. (See spay/neuter handout for reasons why, aside from the animal being easier to rehome). You don't want someone to take the animal in a puppy-mill sort of situation, and spaying/neutering prevents that.

Make your pet as presentable as possible—a good grooming, or even just a bath and a nail trim can go a long way in increasing people's interest in your pet.

Ask for a small amount for a rehoming fee...you want people willing to make at least a small investment in the animal. No “free to good home”...that can attract people who gather pets to sell to laboratories, use for dog fighting bait, even feed kittens to snakes and the like. Even if you don't feel comfortable taking a fee, ask for one and then donate that fee to a local shelter or rescue group.

Advertise...always describe things positively. If you think your dog should not be around kids, don't say “no kids”...say “best for an adult household”, or “prefers children over 10 (or whatever)”. If your cat doesn't like other cats, you can say “prefers to be an only pet”, not “no other cats”.

Ads can go in the local and area papers as well as on internet sites like Craigslist. If placing an ad in the paper make sure it runs on a Sunday...the highest readership of the week. Check into local newspapers like the trader or penny saver; they often have inexpensive ads.

Fliers at vet offices and pet stores often work...you've targeted the pet loving audience. Make sure to include a picture...people read ads with pictures. Be descriptive in your flyer. What tricks do they know? Are they spayed/neutered, up to date on shots, housebroken, crate trained. You are writing a personal ad for your pet.

Interview your callers and interested parties. Don't just give your pet to the first caller. You want to find a forever home for your pet, so don't feel bad about asking a few questions. Some questions you may want to ask include:

- Is the pet for you or someone else? You should always speak to the person who is going to be caring for the pet.
- Do you have other pets at home? Can you tell me about them? This may help in determining a good fit...if your cat hates other cats, and they have two already, this may not be the best fit.
- Have you had pets before (if they don't currently)? If yes, what happened to them? This will give you an idea of how they view pet ownership and their level of responsibility.
- Do you have children? If so, what are their ages? This can help you if you already know your pet will not be good around kids, or if your pet particularly enjoys children.
- Do you live in a house, a mobile home, or an apartment? Many pets do very well in apartments, but some breeds like beagles tend to not adapt very well to apartment life.
- If you rent, does your lease allow pets? May I have your landlord's number? You want to make sure the pet won't get surrendered or given away because the landlord "found out" about a secret pet. You also want to check if the landlord or apartment complex has breed or size restrictions for the pets they do allow.
- Can I come to your home to see where the pet will be living? You don't have to make the visit, although we would recommend it, but anyone who is not willing to allow you to see their home is probably not the best fit for your pet.
- How many hours would the animal be alone during the day? Cats will probably be okay during the day, but some dogs don't do well left alone for 8-10 hours a day. Dogs are pack animals and like companionship of others (dogs or people) and can be destructive when left alone (a perfect segway into crate training!)
- Request references. If they are unwilling to provide any, that may be a red flag.
- Dogs:
 - Does your home have a yard and is it completely fenced? Don't write off a potential adopter who lacks a fenced yard, but make sure they are willing to give the dog the exercise it needs in the form of daily walks.
 - Will the dog get regular exercise? Especially if you know the dog is particularly active and needs 2 or 3 walks a day, be honest with the potential adopters—some people love that kind of bonding with their pets!
- Cats:
 - Will the cat be an indoor or an outdoor cat? Cats allowed outdoors live on average two to three years. They are susceptible to attacks by dogs, hawks, poisonings, traffic accidents, and other untold hazards. Indoor cats can live up to 20 years. Cats adapt well to indoor living.

If all the answers to the questions seem good, arrange to meet the potential adopters—either at your home, their home (often a good choice if you want to check out where the pet will be living), or neutral ground (often good if you are going to be introducing two dogs for the first time). If it feels right, and the interview process was good, you have probably made a good decision. Collect the adoption fee that you have previously discussed. Encourage the new family to keep in touch.

You know the most about your pet, so you are the pet's best option to find a good home. You are the one who can tell about all his or her quirks, adorable things they do, and the tricks they know. Don't give up...your pet deserves patience to find the right home.

*Adapted from "When You Can't Keep Your Chow Chow"
written by Karen Privitello, Lisa Hrico & Barbara Malone.*