

# Guide to dog rehoming



Sainsbury's Bank

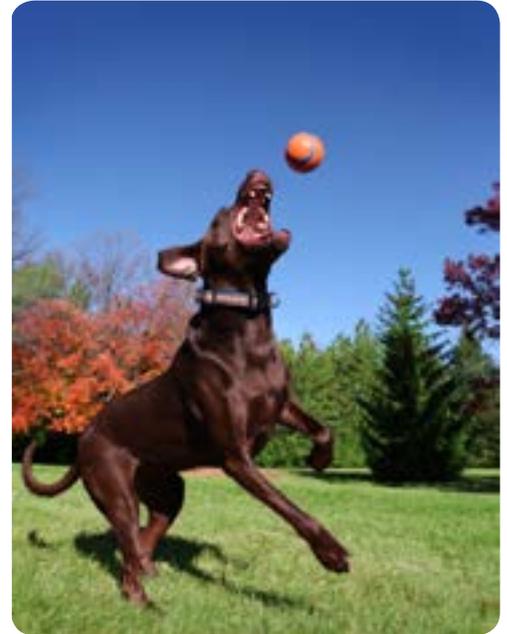
Owning a dog can be an enriching experience. When deciding to buy a dog, you might consider talking to a breeder or, alternatively, visiting an animal shelter to find your new pet. Read on for tips on what you might need to think about, should you be considering the latter option.

## Why would an owner rehome their dog?

Dogs are taken to animal shelters for various reasons. In its [2013 annual review](#), Dogs Trust stated that of the 16,789 dogs in its care during that year, 31% were handed over by owners voluntarily.

According to [Pets4Homes](#), the top three reasons that dog owners give for wanting to rehome their pet are:

1. A change in the status of their relationship, such as a split or a separation
2. Accommodation issues, such as people moving into a rented home where pets are not allowed
3. When an owner becomes pregnant and decides that they need to prioritise their child, or worry that it may not be good around their newborn



Aside from the animals being handed into shelters, a further 68% come from stray pounds or rescue charities. The experts at a shelter should be able to tell you where any of the dogs in their care came from, as well as discuss characteristics of the dog's behaviour.

When dogs are brought to a shelter, they are given a behavioural and temperament assessment. This helps to determine the personality of each dog and can uncover any problems they might have, as well as any underlying causes. There is no standardised check, and the techniques employed can range from seeing how the dog reacts when brought into contact with other canines, to placing it with a foster family for a period of time.

## What do animal shelters do? Where can I find one?

Animal shelters look after dogs (and often cats as well) while waiting to find them a new owner. Prospective owners are usually found via the shelter's website or by visiting the shelter itself. Many of these organisations exist throughout the UK, and some have several branches in different regions. Researching online can help you find one in your area. Some larger institutions include:

- [Battersea Dogs & Cats Home](#)
- [Blue Cross](#)
- [Dogs Trust](#)
- [The RSPCA](#)
- [The SSPCA](#)

Many shelters will have a website which will include listings of dogs waiting to be rehomed, often categorised by breed. This can be particularly helpful if you have a specific breed in mind. It might also include details of the behavioural assessment.

When you take a dog home, some shelters might ask you for a fee of between £80 and £170 to help cover the costs of looking after the dog whilst it was in their care. These costs could include:

- Vaccinations
- Neutering
- Health tests
- Identification chips
- Flea treatments
- Worming
- A collar and lead



## Requirements of the shelter

Most shelters have a process in place to help ensure that both dog and owner are a good match for each other. This can involve filling out some forms about your living situation and any imminent plans you might have. Some questions you might be asked are:



- How many adults live at your address?
- What are their professions and working hours?
- Does anyone there suffer from asthma?
- How would you describe your home? e.g. a flat, a bungalow
- Do you own your home or is it rented?
- If it is rented, can you provide evidence that pets are allowed?
- Do you have a garden?
- If so, is it private or shared?
- If you have a garden, is it securely fenced?
- Is everyone in your family keen to adopt a dog?
- In the next few months, are you planning to:
  - Move home?
  - Change your working hours?
  - Have a baby?

By asking these questions the shelter can be reassured the dog will be moving into a stable new home it can thrive in. The process could also involve a home visit from a representative to ensure that a prospective pooch will be happy there, as well as to offer advice on any changes to the home that might be beneficial to your new pet. If your home is too far away for a visit, they might ask that you have a local vet or another rescue centre representative conduct the visit on their behalf.

Some places won't give a dog to someone under the age of 18 or 21, so make sure you read their requirements thoroughly. Each shelter is different so it might be best to speak to a representative if you have any questions.

Lynn Barber, head of canine behaviour and training from Dogs Trust, offered these insights into what shelters might look for when rehoming a dog:

### **Expectations**

*I start by asking people what their expectations of a dog are. Do they want to get out and about for lots of exercise? Or do they want it for companionship? Maybe they want a companion for their current dog or a four-legged friend for their child to grow up with.*

### **Experience**

*I always ask what a prospective owner's experience is with dogs. It is good to know what breeds they have had in the past and whether they had good or bad experiences with them.*

### **Lifestyle**

*Shelters need to know what sort of lifestyle an individual or a family has, to assess their suitability for a dog and what sort of dog would be the best fit for them. I ask about how long the dog will be left unattended during the day.*



## **Other considerations**

You will also need to take any other pets you have into consideration. A reputable shelter should discuss any possible issues with you, and help you find a dog with the right temperament to suit your situation.

## What about allergies?

You might also need to consider whether you or members of your family have any allergies. There are many breeds out there that may be more compatible with those who tend to sneeze and get watery eyes when furry friends come near. Smaller dogs with thicker coats may shed less dander (dry skin cells, which is where many allergens can be found) than other dogs, so it might be worth keeping that in mind.

There are other ways to control your allergic symptoms, such as keeping your bedroom pet free, and having hardwood floors instead of carpets, as these can trap dander in the pile. Doing your dog grooming outside rather than indoors can also help lower the possibility of allergens collecting in your home.

## Taking your dog home

A rehomed dog may have different needs to one that you select from a breeder. It's possible they may have formed habits and behaviours that they need support to solve. Your choice of shelter may be able to advise on these.

Sue Ketland, training and behaviour consultant from Wood Green, says it's important to ask yourself, "Do you have enough time to devote to settling a new dog into your home, and are you prepared to and able to provide the right kind of training?"

## Approaching a dog for the first time

Lynn Barber, head of behaviour and training from Dogs Trust, had some more useful tips to share for the first time you meet a pooch.

*Meeting a dog for the first time should be a positive experience for both the human and dog. It is about being sensitive to the dog's needs, keeping*



*it calm and being guided by the dog, but at the same time keeping yourself safe. There are a few things you can do to maximise the chances of a happy and successful meeting:*

- 1. Keep calm and give the dog space. Walking parallel to them is good.*
- 2. Don't over-excite them or encourage them to jump up. Keep your behaviour calm and low key.*
- 3. Do not bend down to the dog or put your face too close to them. Stay standing at a respectful distance.*
- 4. Allow them to come to you rather than approaching them, and be guided by instructions from the handler.*



## **Returning a dog**

If things don't work out for you and your new pet, you should be able to return the dog without too much trouble. Even if every care is taken to match you with a canine that fits in with your lifestyle and environment, it is possible you won't find a match straight away. Having a conversation with your shelter about this sort of scenario can help give you peace of mind.

Should you feel that things aren't working out, simply contact your shelter and they will be able to advise you of next steps to take

## **Insuring your rehomed dog**

The process for taking out insurance cover for a rehomed dog is as easy as doing so with one from a breeder. Insurance policies tend to be available to dogs that are over eight weeks old and under nine years of age, but once you have one in place it can extend beyond that limit. Have a look at our guide to [pet insurance made simple](#) for more information.



## **A new life together**

The rewards of rehoming a dog are numerous; from the satisfaction of helping a pooch in need, to a sense of fulfilment as you watch your new friend flourish in your care. Choosing to take in a dog from a shelter can result in a new family member that provides you with joy and gratification, as well as unconditional love.

- 1) <http://www.dogstrust.org.uk/about/annualreview/2013annualrev.pdf>
- 2) <http://www.pets4homes.co.uk/>
- 3) <http://www.battersea.org.uk/>
- 4) <http://dogstrust.org.uk/>
- 5) <http://www.bluecross.org.uk/>
- 6) <http://www.rspca.org.uk/home>
- 7) <http://www.scottishspca.org/>
- 8) <http://www.sainsburysbank.co.uk/pet-insurance/demystifying-pet-insurance.shtml>

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