

The Adoption Process

When you visit a shelter, keep in mind that you are not seeing the animals at their best. They are in a strange environment, surrounded by other animals they don't know. Some will be very excited, jumping and barking as you approach. Others will be quiet and a bit scared – but don't be too quick to judge them, as they will adjust once they're settled into a family. It's best for everyone in your household to be part of the adoption process – in fact, many shelters require that.

Ask the staff for more information about the animal(s) that interest you. Ask if the dog is good with children, with other dogs, with cats, etc. It's also a good idea to ask if the dog has any known triggers or traumas. It's best if you can interact with the dog outside or in a separate area away from the stress of the animal rooms. If you already have a dog, you should bring him or her to meet a potential sibling in a neutral setting to make sure they're compatible before adopting.

You will be asked to complete an adoption questionnaire and meet with shelter staff to discuss your expectations and lifestyle in order to find the best match. Don't take it personally if you are not accepted for adoption, or for the particular dog you wanted. This may be a sign that you're not ready for a dog yet – or just not right for that dog.

Who's who in animal adoption?

You might be wondering: what's the difference between a humane society, SPCA, rescue group and municipal shelter?

Humane Society/SPCA

This generally refers to an organization dedicated to the betterment of animal welfare. They usually run a shelter and an animal adoption program to find new homes for abandoned, mistreated and/or surrendered animals.

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They also conduct education in their community and may or may not be mandated to enforce provincial and federal animal cruelty laws. They usually work closely with the police when animal cruelty charges are laid.

Shelter

Refers to the physical building where animals are held when they are being put up for adoption. It is usually run by an organization such as a humane society, SPCA or municipal animal services. Good shelters not only do comprehensive physical exams on all the animals that they receive, but they also do temperament testing to ensure that all animals available for adoption will be safe members of the community.

Rescue organization

Animal rescue organizations are usually run out of an individual's home or by a network of individuals who foster animals until they are ready to be adopted. Some may concentrate on a certain breed of dog or cat.

Pound

This is a municipal animal shelter. Some municipalities contract their local humane society or SPCA to provide the pound service and some are run independent of the local humane society or SPCA. Pounds generally take in stray animals and usually keep them for 3 business days to give owners a chance to claim their lost animals. Many pounds will then offer the animals for adoption.

Satellite Adoption Centre

A satellite adoption centre is a pet store or other location that does not sell cats and dogs, but instead displays cats and dogs that are available for adoption from a humane society, SPCA or rescue organization. Interested adopters must be approved under the same screening process that the shelter organization has in place for all the animals it adopts out. Many of the above animal welfare

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organizations work hard to reunite lost pets with owners and promote adoption of unclaimed animals. Others, unfortunately, have little funding and few staff and provide only the bare minimum and then euthanize pets that are not adopted.

The bottom line is, healthy, adoptable pets in need of homes can be found through any of these sources, so in most areas, there is no shortage of options for finding your perfect adoptable dog!