
Adopting a Pet
FOR
DUMMIES®

by Eve Adamson



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Adopting a Pet

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Eve Adamson is an award-winning pet writer and the author, coauthor, or contributor to more than 40 books including *Labrador Retrievers For Dummies* and *Dachshunds For Dummies*. She is a contributing editor for *Dog Fancy* magazine and writes frequently for many pet publications; among them are *Your Dog*, *Dogs USA*, *Puppies USA*, *Cat Fancy*, *Cats USA*, *Kittens USA*, *Veterinary Practice News*, and *Popular Pets*, including the issues on *Guinea Pigs*, *Rats*, and many issues on dog training and behavior. She writes the “Good Grooming” column for *AKC Family Dog* magazine and a breed profile column and a natural dog care column for *Pet Product News*, and she is a member of the Dog Writer’s Association of America and the Cat Writer’s Association of America.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to all the animals around the world tamed by humans but then left behind and to all the humans who stood up, stepped forward, and put their hearts on the line to give these animals a second chance at health and happiness. This book is also dedicated to Sally, my heart dog.

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Contents at a Glance

.....

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Part I: All About Pet Adoption</i>	7
Chapter 1: Exploring the Pet Adoption Option.....	9
Chapter 2: Seeking Shelter: Finding and Using Animal Shelters.....	23
Chapter 3: Rescue Me! All About Pet Rescue Groups	35
<i>Part II: Welcoming a Dog into Your Life</i>	49
Chapter 4: Choosing Your Dog.....	51
Chapter 5: Helping Your Adopted Dog Make the Homecoming Transition	73
Chapter 6: Caring for Your Adopted Dog.....	91
Chapter 7: Doggy Boot Camp: Basic Training and Behavior Management	109
<i>Part III: Here Kitty Kitty: Rescuing a Cat</i>	135
Chapter 8: Finding the Purrfect Feline for You.....	137
Chapter 9: Welcoming Home Your Adopted Cat.....	151
Chapter 10: Kitty Care.....	165
Chapter 11: You Really Can Train a Cat	183
<i>Part IV: Befriending a Little Critter</i>	197
Chapter 12: Choosing Your Critter	199
Chapter 13: Getting Ready for Your Critter	213
Chapter 14: Taking Charge of Your Critter's Care	221
Chapter 15: Critter Behavior and Training.....	231
<i>Part V: Bringing Home a Feathered Friend</i>	245
Chapter 16: From Macaws to Budgies: Choosing Your Feathered Friend	247
Chapter 17: Creating a Bird-Friendly Home	259
Chapter 18: Caring for Your Adopted Bird	269
Chapter 19: Training Your Bird	281
<i>Part VI: Giving an Exotic a Second Chance</i>	295
Chapter 20: Choosing a Creepy Crawler.....	297
Chapter 21: Preparing for Your Exotic Pet	307
Chapter 22: Exotic Care and Feeding	317
Chapter 23: Snake Charming and Herp Handling: How to Train Your Exotic Pet	329

<i>Part VII: The Part of Tens</i>	339
Chapter 24: Ten Great Reasons to Spay or Neuter Your Adopted Pet	341
Chapter 25: Ten Favors You Can Do for Your Adopted Pet	343
Chapter 26: Ten Ways to Support Your Local Shelter or Rescue Group	345
<i>Index</i>	347

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	1
About This Book.....	2
Conventions Used in This Book.....	3
What You're Not to Read.....	3
Foolish Assumptions.....	4
How This Book Is Organized.....	4
Part I: All About Pet Adoption.....	4
Part II: Welcoming a Dog into Your Life.....	5
Part III: Here Kitty Kitty: Rescuing a Cat.....	5
Part IV: Befriending a Little Critter.....	5
Part V: Bringing Home a Feathered Friend.....	5
Part VI: Giving an Exotic a Second Chance.....	5
Part VII: The Part of Tens.....	6
Icons Used in This Book.....	6
Where to Go from Here.....	6
<i>Part I: All About Pet Adoption</i>	7
Chapter 1: Exploring the Pet Adoption Option	9
Making Sure You're Ready to Be a Good Pet Parent.....	9
Considering the time commitment.....	10
Being mindful of housing restrictions.....	12
Affording a pet.....	13
The Good Part: Adopted Pets = Love.....	14
Perfect Pet Profile Quiz: Find Out What Kind of Pet You Really Want.....	15
Beyond the Glamour: What It Means to Adopt . . .	18
A dog.....	18
A cat.....	19
A small mammal.....	19
A birdie.....	20
An exotic.....	21
Finding Your New Best Friend through Shelters, Humane Societies, and Rescues.....	21
Uncovering the basics of animal shelters.....	22
Demystifying the rescue group.....	22
Chapter 2: Seeking Shelter: Finding and Using Animal Shelters . . .	23
Animal Shelters Explained.....	24
Shelter pros.....	26
Shelter cons.....	27

Finding a Great Shelter Near You	28
Checking the Yellow Pages and Internet	28
Rounding up recommendations	29
Walking through the Adoption Process.....	30
Checking out the facility.....	30
Looking at the pets.....	31
Asking the right questions	32
Avoiding second thoughts: The waiting period	33
Sealing the Deal	34

Chapter 3: Rescue Me! All About Pet Rescue Groups 35

Weighing the Pros and Cons of Adopting from a Rescue Group	36
Rescue group pros	36
Rescue group cons	38
Scouting Out a Particular Rescue Group	38
Asking around	39
Surfing the Net	39
Surviving the Screening Process.....	40
Making contact and checking references.....	41
Answering questions, questions, and more questions.....	42
Preparing for a house visit	44
Meeting the pets.....	45
Making a Commitment: Signing the Rescue Contract	47

***Part II: Welcoming a Dog into Your Life* 49**

Chapter 4: Choosing Your Dog 51

Puppies Are Precious, but	51
Pros and cons of adopting a puppy	52
Pros and cons of adopting an adult dog.....	53
Deciding on a Male or Female.....	54
Identifying Signs of a Healthy Dog	55
Bright eyes and bushy tails.....	55
Skin-tastic	56
Bringing up the rear	57
The great big world: How the dog interacts	58
Temperament Testing.....	58
Exploring the effects of breed temperament	59
Understanding the basics of temperament.....	62
Go-getters, chill-outers, and wait-and-seers	63
What Kind of Dog Is That? The Joy of Mixed Breeds.....	64
Adopting a Purebred Dog.....	66
All about breed groups	67
Good buddies: Companion dogs	67
Imposing Guardian breeds	68
Active Sporting breeds	69
Born to run: Cold-hardy Northern breeds.....	70

Eye on the prize: Sighthounds	70
The nose knows: Scenthounds	71
Feisty Terrier breeds	71
Superfocused Herding breeds	72
Chapter 5: Helping Your Adopted Dog	
Make the Homecoming Transition	73
Preparing Your Pad	73
Puppy-proofing first (even for adult dogs)	74
Gathering doggy accoutrements	76
Welcoming Doggy Home.....	80
Dog, meet potty spot	80
Showing your dog to his den	81
Introducing your people.....	83
Introducing other pets.....	85
Downtime	88
Recognizing Adjustment Problems	89
Chapter 6: Caring for Your Adopted Dog	91
Keeping Your Dog Healthy	92
First things first: Choosing a great vet.....	92
Giving your new friend a good once-over: The first exam	93
Noticing problems after you get home	97
Following up with an annual exam	99
Somebody's Hungry!.....	99
Choosing the right food for your dog	100
Addressing bad nutritional habits: What your dog	
doesn't need to eat	101
Helping Fido's tummy transition	101
Deciding when to ring the dinner bell	102
Keeping an eye on your dog's waistline	102
Administering the body evaluation test.....	103
Correcting a weight problem	104
Good Grooming Matters.....	105
Grooming disguised as a checkup.....	105
Brush, comb, trim, bathe, and polish	106
Chapter 7: Doggy Boot Camp: Basic Training	
and Behavior Management	109
Housetraining Made Easy.....	110
Beginning with the basics	110
Adding crate training	112
Adding schedule training	113
Dealing with mistakes	113
Teaching Good Doggy Manners.....	114
Off to school: Finding a training class	114
Socialization strategies.....	116
Teaching the building-block training cues	118

Breaking Adopted Dogs of Bad Habits	123
Managing Behavior Problems Common to Adopted Dogs.....	125
Lassie come home: Keeping your dog from running away	125
Oh the noise, noise, noise, noise, noise:	
Curtailing excessive barking	126
My dog is knocking me over: Teaching dogs	
to quit jumping up	127
Didn't I have a couch here? Ending destructive chewing	127
Ouch! Nipping that annoying nipping and biting	129
But this is my dinner! Stopping your dog from begging.....	129
Where's the garden? Reclaiming your yard from a digger	130
Comeback Kid: Coping with Separation Anxiety	130
Who's the Boss? Managing Aggression	131
Managing the Mistreated Dog.....	133
Deciding whether you can handle a problem.....	133
Getting professional help	134

Part III: Here Kitty Kitty: Rescuing a Cat 135

Chapter 8: Finding the Purrfect Feline for You 137

Deciding between a Kitten and a Cat.....	138
Considering a kitten	138
Acknowledging the advantages of an adult cat	139
Boy cat or girl cat?	140
What about feral and stray cats?.....	140
Recognizing Signs of a Healthy Cat	141
Silky coats and eyes like jewels	142
Itchy kitty? Signs of parasites and skin/coat problems.....	142
The tail end	142
Curiosity quotient: How your cat interacts	143
Temperament Testing.....	143
Determining what traits suit your fancy.....	144
Profiling kitty companions	144
Asking the experts: Shelter workers	
provide the skinny on your kitty	145
Finding a Good Match: What to Expect	
from Different Breeds and Mixes	146
Cats of undetermined origin: Mixed-breed cats	146
Perfectly stunning Persians (and their relatives)	148
Clever Siamese . . . both types!.....	149
The all-American shorthairs	149
Mellow Maine coons, America's native long-haired cat	150

Chapter 9: Welcoming Home Your Adopted Cat	151
Kitten-Proofing — Even For Adult Cats!	151
Stocking Up on Supplies	153
Gathering the basics	153
Spoiling Fluffy with fancy supplies	157
What to Expect When You Get Home	158
Getting acclimated	158
Meeting the family	159
Meeting resident pets	160
Run of the house	163
Recognizing Adjustment Problems	164
Chapter 10: Kitty Care	165
Keeping Your Cat Healthy	165
Choosing a great cat vet	166
The first exam	166
Remaining on the lookout for health problems	169
Making time for an annual exam	172
Chow Time!	173
Choosing the right food for your cat	173
Avoiding harmful foods	174
Switching foods	175
Deciding between free feeding and meal feeding	175
Do you have a fat cat or a scrawny kitty?	176
Helping Your Cat Practice Good Feline Hygiene	178
Grooming disguised as a health-care checkup	178
Brushing and combing basics	179
Clipping nails down to size, not the quick	180
Giving a cat a bath	181
Chapter 11: You Really Can Train a Cat	183
Not Going Outside the Box	184
Kitty, meet litter	184
Dealing with litter-box aversion	184
Your Cat: Mighty Hunter	185
Scratch Zone	186
Foiling the Climbing Cat	188
Attack Cat: Biting, Scratching, and Pouncing	189
The Amazing Disappearing Kitty: Shyness and Hiding	191
Harry Hou-Kitty: The Escape Artist Cat	192
Cat Talk: When Your Cat Just Won't Be Quiet	193
Cat on Cat: Sibling Rivalry and Other-Pet Issues	193
Calming Kitten Chaos	194
Finding a Feline Behaviorist	194
Training Your Cat the Easy Way	195

Part IV: Befriending a Little Critter 197**Chapter 12: Choosing Your Critter 199**

Considering a Little Critter	199
Exploring the appeal of small-animal pets	200
Deciding you and small critters aren't a fit.....	201
Pairing kids with critters: Perfect pet or potential problem?.....	201
Finding the Critter That's Right for You	203
Ferret facts	203
Rabbit run-down.....	205
Guinea-pig guide.....	205
Rats rule.....	206
Hamster and gerbil handbook.....	207
Mouse manifesto	208
Exotics: Chinchillas and hedgehogs	209
Save a Critter Today! Finding Adoptable Critters	210

Chapter 13: Getting Ready for Your Critter 213

Preparing Your Home for Critter Conditions.....	213
Making your home critterproof	214
Considering the free-roaming route.....	214
Stocking Crucial Critter Supplies	215
Settling into a new enclosure.....	215
Getting the supplies your pet needs.....	218
Helping Your New Critter Settle In	219
Understand the limits of handling.....	219
Give him space.....	219
Supervise your children	220
Know when to get help and when to back off.....	220

Chapter 14: Taking Charge of Your Critter's Care 221

Keeping Your Critter Healthy	221
Finding a good critter vet	222
Understanding potential health problems	223
Keeping your critters from breeding!	225
Knowing when to see a vet.....	226
Feeding Your Critter.....	227
Critter Grooming	229

Chapter 15: Critter Behavior and Training 231

Adopted Small Animal Issues	231
Fixing what you can	232
Managing what you can.....	234
Accepting what you can't change	235
Knowing when it's a physical problem.....	236

Understanding What Small Animals Can and Should Learn	236
Litter-box training your ferret.....	237
Litter-box training your rabbit.....	238
Hand-taming pocket pets	239
Teaching small animals to come	241
Interpreting Your Small Animal's Sounds and Movements.....	241
Understanding ferret sounds and behavior.....	241
Hearing what your rabbit is saying.....	242
Figuring out your rat's behavior.....	243
Listening to your guinea pig	243
Checking out hamster, gerbil, and mouse behaviors	244

Part V: Bringing Home a Feathered Friend 245

Chapter 16: From Macaws to Budgies:

Choosing Your Feathered Friend 247

Understanding Your Adopted Bird	248
Knowing What Adopted Birds Need	249
Finding a Breed that Suits You	250
Choosing for health and temperament.....	251
Go large: Macaws and cockatoos	252
Talking about Amazon parrots and African greys.....	253
Conures, Quakers, toucans, and other medium-sized birds.....	254
What about doves?.....	255
Parakeets and cockatiels: Pros and cons	256

Chapter 17: Creating a Bird-Friendly Home 259

Getting Ready for a Bird in the House	259
Bird-proofing.....	259
To fly free or not to fly free?.....	261
The Best Bird Supplies	262
Cage considerations.....	262
Food for the birds.....	263
Perches	263
Bird stimulation: Toys and climbing devices.....	264
Travel carrier or small travel cage.....	264
Cage cover.....	264
Perch cleaner	264
Cuttlebone.....	265
Nontoxic cage bedding.....	265
Spray bottle, grooming spray, or a bird bath.....	265
Nail trimmers or cement perch	265
Bringing Home Birdie.....	265
Introducing your new bird to its new home	266
Getting to know the family	267
Child-bird relations	267
Other pets: The Tweety and Sylvester syndrome.....	268

Chapter 18: Caring for Your Adopted Bird269

Keeping Your Bird Healthy.....	269
Finding a good bird vet.....	270
The first vet visit	271
Common health problems in adopted birds.....	272
Bird breeding: Why — and how — not to	274
Feeding Your Adopted Bird: A Mixed Bag.....	275
Giving your bird a balanced diet.....	275
Giving your bird the best and worst foods	276
Understanding the diets of specific species	278
Knowing how often to feed your bird.....	279
Converting your bird to the proper diet	279
Grooming Your Bird	280

Chapter 19: Training Your Bird281

Understanding Bird Behavior.....	281
Solving Bird Behavior Problems	282
The bird that won't adjust: Fear and anxiety.....	283
Noise solutions	285
Biting and aggression.....	286
Feather picking and chewing	287
Finding an Avian Behavior Consultant	288
Bird Bonding: Bringing Out Your Bird's Best.....	288
Bird Basic Training.....	289
Socializing with your bird.....	290
Hand-training	290
The step-up cue	291
Teaching your bird to behave on your shoulder	292
Cage-free manners.....	292
Mating Season and Avian Adolescence	293

Part VI: Giving an Exotic a Second Chance295**Chapter 20: Choosing a Creepy Crawler297**

Determining Whether Exotic Herps and “Bugs” Are Right for You.....	298
Picking Your Exotic Pet	299
Constrictors: Pythons, boas, and other huggable snakes.....	300
Small slitherers: Garter snakes, king snakes, corn snakes, and other Colubrids	301
Green iguanas	301
Turtle time.....	302
Other reptiles of the tropics and the deserts	303
The slime factor: Frogs, salamanders, and newts	304

Shell chic: All about hermit crabs	305
Bugs: Tarantulas and beyond	305
Seeking Out Secondhand Snakes, Lizards, and Spiders	306
Chapter 21: Preparing for Your Exotic Pet	307
Herp-Proofing Your Home	307
Exotic Equipment and Supplies.....	309
Exotic enclosures	309
Light, heat, bedding, and water	311
Exotic supply list	313
Exotic Homecoming: What to Expect	314
Traveling with your exotic — bringing him home	314
Welcoming your pet home — making him comfortable.....	315
Chapter 22: Exotic Care and Feeding	317
Bright Eyes and Scaly Tails	317
Finding a good exotic pet vet.....	318
What to expect during the first exam	319
Recognizing special health problems	
adopted exotics may have.....	320
Noticing when your exotic is sick and needs a vet.....	321
Identifying reasons not to be alarmed.....	322
Exotics and kids: What you must know.....	323
Exotic Meals: Feeding Your Exotic Pet	324
Snacks for snakes	324
Lizard lunch	325
Turtle tidbits.....	326
Amphibian appetizers.....	326
Arachnids and other “bug” basics	327
Hungry hermit crabs.....	327
Herp Hygiene and Grooming	327
Chapter 23: Snake Charming and Herp Handling:	
How to Train Your Exotic Pet	329
Exploring the Possibilities and Limits of Exotic Taming and Training....	330
How to recognize a tamed exotic	330
How to tame your exotic	331
Handling Your Exotic Pet	332
Snake couture	332
Lizard love.....	334
Turtle touch	335
Touchy toads and feely frogs.....	336
Tarantula taming	336
Hermit crab handling.....	337
Dealing with a Herp Bite.....	338

Part VII: The Part of Tens.....339**Chapter 24: Ten Great Reasons to Spay
or Neuter Your Adopted Pet341**

You Can Do It on the Cheap	341
Spaying/Neutering Makes Pets Healthier	341
Spaying/Neutering Keeps Pets Home	341
So What If Your Pet Is a Purebred?	342
Spaying/Neutering Improves Behavior	342
If They Never Do It, They Never Miss It	342
Reproduction Is Risky.....	342
Your Pet Won't Miss the "Family Jewels"	342
Eight Million Pets and Counting.....	342

Chapter 25: Ten Favors You Can Do for Your Adopted Pet343

A Forever Home.....	343
The Right Diet . . . at Last	343
Indoor Shelter	343
Exercise, Exercise, Exercise	344
Attention	344
Physical Touch . . . or Not	344
Mental Challenges for Better Behavior	344
Family Member Status	344
Grooming and Good Housekeeping	344
Regular Vet Care	344

**Chapter 26: Ten Ways to Support Your
Local Shelter or Rescue Group345**

Volunteering.....	345
Donating Money or Talent.....	345
Fostering a Pet	345
Dropping Off Food and Supplies	346
Giving Gifts in Others' Names.....	346
Referring Your Friends	346
Staying Informed	346
Spreading the Word	346
Starting a Rescue.....	346
Adopting Another Pet.....	346

Index.....347

Introduction

.....

I have lived with many animals: dogs, cats, birds, hamsters, mice, snakes, lizards, fish, tarantulas and other large startling bugs. Some were rescued, some purchased, and some were adopted from shelters. I've also made many common pet-owner errors throughout the years. I even gave up a few of my beloved pets to rescue groups when I thought I no longer could keep them. And then one day, there I was, a pet writer without a pet. I hadn't had the heart to try any of it again until one day in 1999, when I walked into the Iowa City/Coralville Animal Care and Adoption Center.

I meandered along the rows of kennels looking at the enthusiastic Lab mixes, the baying Beagles, the pining pit bulls and I kept thinking, "They won't have a small dog; they won't have a small dog." And then I saw Sally, a slender, delicate, fine-boned rat terrier with Italian Greyhound features, golden-brown eyes, velvety ears that tipped loosely forward, and a tight white coat with orange markings. She was all of 11 pounds, sitting still, all alone in the middle of the spacious kennel, staring at me. I stopped. She stared. I stared. She stared harder. It was almost as though she were trying to persuade me, with the force of her terrier will, that I simply must take her home. "Uh-oh," I thought. "Here we go."

I brought my children to meet Sally. We visited three times before Sally came home with us. Of all the dogs I've ever kept — purebreds, strays, free-to-good-home fellows — Sally is special. She seems to know that I will keep her forever, that her home is finally a forever home. Sure, she needed training and had a few bad habits, but we went to obedience class, worked hard, housetrained, learned tricks, went on walks, and now she rests contentedly at my feet while I work. Eventually, I brought home another little terrier mix named Jack, who has glaucoma and probably will be blind before the tender age of 3. Sally, the good big sister that she is, is now a dog's guide dog in training, but most of all she's the best dog friend I think I will ever know.

My point about Sally is that of all the many places you can find a wonderful pet, some of the best are animal shelters and pet rescue groups. There you find animals discarded by pet owners who could not or would not, for whatever reason, keep them. Regardless of the problems — poor health, lack of training, overexuberance caused by loneliness, fear-based shyness, or nippiness — the right pet owner with the right knowledge can help a pet to heal. Thousands of pets are waiting because they were failed by people who relinquished their responsibility and gave up, got bored, got tired, or let life get in the way. Some of these people couldn't help giving up their pets. Nevertheless, what remains are the recycled animals, waiting for someone willing to make the commitment of time, energy, money, and heart to take care of them for the rest of their lives.

Sally changed my life for the better, and I am willing to bet that a shelter pet is out there waiting to change your life. *Adopting a Pet For Dummies* is designed to help you find, care for, nurture, feed, train, socialize, and love an animal that desperately needs a second home. Some of these animals have health and behavior problems, but with patience and the knowledge and guidance this book provides you can usually recognize and manage the problems shelter animals tend to experience. I help you decide which kind of pet is right for you, give you resources for finding the kind of animal you want, and help you to do the right thing for your new animal companion after you've decided to give a pet a second chance. Sometimes the best things in life are the things other people throw away.

About This Book

This book covers many kinds of animals, and if I'd intended it to tell you everything you'd ever need to know about finding, caring for, feeding, housing, and training dogs, cats, small mammals, birds, reptiles, and other animals you might conceivably adopt, well . . . you can only imagine how big of a book it might be. The book you hold in your hands, instead, is a starting line — a guide to pet adoption and the overarching care and training information you need to get started in your new life with your new adopted pet. For more information on the precise care needs of the individual pet you decide to adopt, please consult any of the many other *For Dummies* guides on pet care published by Wiley, from books about specific purebred dogs like *Labrador Retrievers For Dummies* by Joel Walton and yours truly, to books like *Cats For Dummies* by Gina Spadafori and Paul D. Pion, *Parrots For Dummies* by Nikki Moustaki, *Ferrets For Dummies* by Kim Schilling, *Rabbits For Dummies* by Audrey Pavia, and *Reptiles & Amphibians For Dummies* by Patricia Bartlett, which are filled with useful and much more detailed information about these kinds of pets.

Each section of this book relates to a separate issue about adopting a pet or caring for an adopted pet. Because adopted pets have certain unique challenges, this book focuses on what you need to know about animals that have already had at least one home that didn't work out. You find out information about:

- ✔ Knowing the differences between animal shelters and pet rescue groups and how to work with both.
- ✔ Determining what kind of pets are most likely available and in need of good homes (and why).
- ✔ Discovering what to expect when you adopt a pet — from fees and applications to first-day pet jitters and behavioral problems.
- ✔ Finding a great vet, a quality food, the right housing, and everything else your pet needs to be happy and healthy.

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