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*Adopting a Pet*  
FOR  
DUMMIES®

by Eve Adamson



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## Adopting a Pet For Dummies®

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## About the Author

**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.

Eve is an active supporter of the Iowa City/Coralville Animal Adoption Center, where she adopted her terrier, Sally, in 1999. She lives with her family in Iowa City, which includes partner Ben Minkler, sons Angus and Emmett, terriers Sally and Jack, a parakeet named Snugglebunny, a dwarf hamster named Mr. Hampy, and three little fish ceremoniously dubbed Little Fishies 1, 2, and 3. You can find out more about Eve and her most recent publications at her Web site, [www.eveadamson.com](http://www.eveadamson.com).





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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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# Introduction

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**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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