



How to adopt a pet from the RSPCA

The RSPCA is a trusted organisation, so unsurprisingly, it's often the first choice for those wishing to adopt a companion animal. If you're thinking of bringing that special dog, cat or other pet into your home, adopting through the RSPCA is an ideal way to find a potential pet who is waiting for their forever home and whose needs match your lifestyle.

Adopting a companion animal is a rewarding experience, but it's not something you do every day.

You may have questions about the process, so follow our checklist for the key steps involved.

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☐ Commitment

Pet ownership is a serious responsibility. Before you start looking, important [questions to consider](#) are:

- Can you commit to caring for your new companion animal for their entire life, which could be up to 15 years or longer?
- Can you afford the ongoing costs of pet ownership? These include food, preventative treatments, veterinary costs (including for emergencies) and possibly also training, grooming and boarding.
- Do you know how to care for the kind of companion animal you're looking for? If not, you should learn about this before you start your search. RSPCA Australia provides free evidence-based information on [how to care for a new dog, cat and other pets too](#).
- Do you have the time to provide a pet with the care they need?
- Can you provide them with suitable accommodation and adequate space?

☐ Selection

All animals have their own personalities and needs, so before you begin your search, it's advisable to consider the individual characteristics of the animal you wish to adopt. If you are thinking about adding a [dog](#) or [cat](#) to your family, you will need to think about the following to find the best fit:

Age: Do you have the time to raise and train a puppy or kitten? This can be challenging at first and includes toilet training as well as basic training and meeting their socialisation needs. If you don't think this kind of commitment is a good fit for you and your situation, adult companion animals are over the

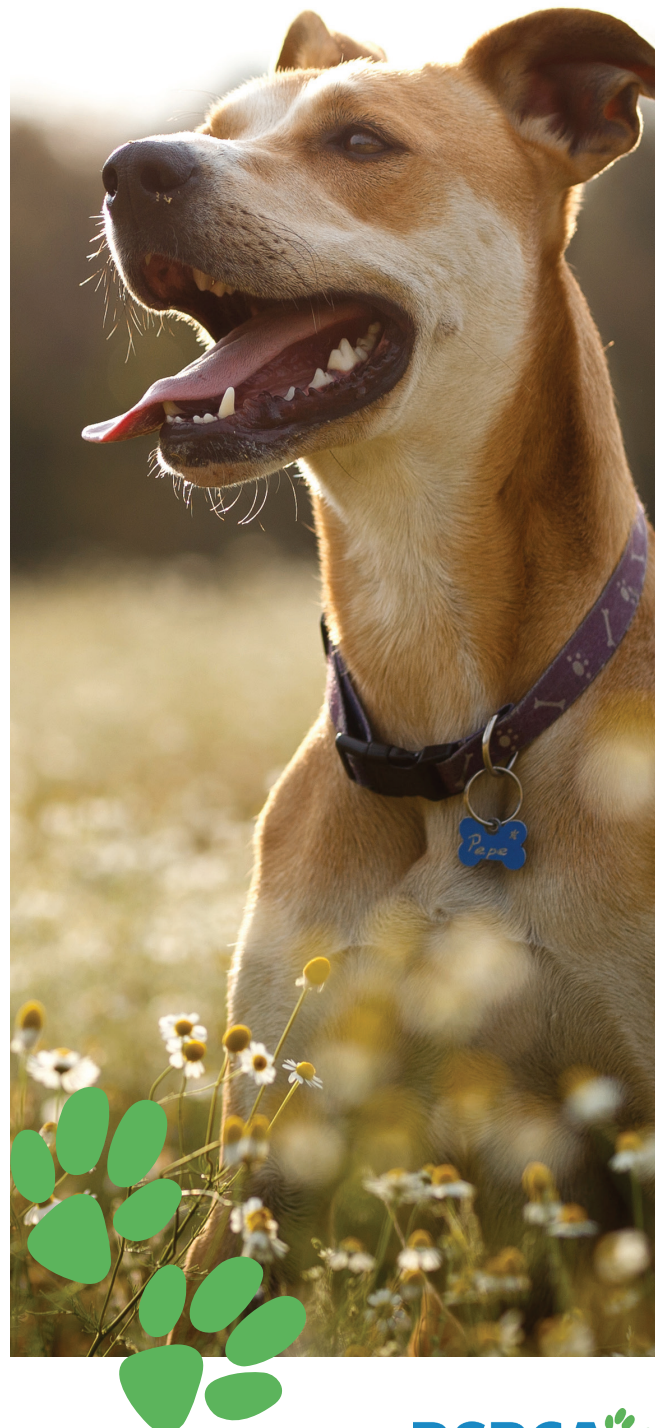


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puppy or kitten stage (and the work involved!) and they have established personalities, so you'll also have a better idea of compatibility. And don't overlook [older pets](#), who can be well suited to seniors, first time owners, families with children, and anyone who likes to lead a quieter life!

Personality: Individual dogs and cats vary widely in temperament and personality, including qualities such as being confident, friendly, affectionate, calm, energetic, intelligent, protective, independent, playful and many others. When you adopt from the RSPCA, the shelter staff will have a good sense of each animal's unique personality, so let them know what's important to you and your family, including whether you need a companion animal who is comfortable around children or compatible with existing pets.

Health: All [RSPCA animals](#) being offered for adoption have been assessed as suitable for rehoming on health and behavioural grounds. Dogs and cats have also been vaccinated, wormed, microchipped and desexed. The cost of this is partly covered by the adoption fee you will pay. Shelter staff are trained to provide information about the health and other care needs of the animal you adopt. It's important to be aware, however, that some dogs and cats who were bred to have exaggerated features (such as flat faces) are at risk of developing [serious health problems](#). Examples include Pugs, French and British Bulldogs, Boston Terriers and Persian cats whose short noses can cause severe breathing difficulties and other issues. Be prepared that these animals will require more daily care and higher veterinary costs, which could include surgery. They may find exercise difficult and are also at risk of heat stroke, so are usually not suitable if you are looking for a dog to participate in significant physical exercise with you, especially in the heat.



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Grooming requirements: All cats and dogs need [regular grooming](#) so if you don't have time to do this daily, consider a short-haired pet, as dogs and cats with medium or long-haired coats and those who shed will need a daily brush.

Exercise needs: All dogs need at least a daily walk, but some require more exercise based on their breed and energy levels, so be advised by the shelter staff. Exercise and play are critical to the wellbeing of cats too, with three five-minute periods of intense play recommended per day at a minimum.

Size: If you're planning to adopt a large dog, make sure you have sufficient indoor and outdoor space for them and remember they will eat more and may need more exercise than smaller dogs.

☐ Preparation

If you've decided on the type of companion animal you'd like to adopt, you can start setting up your home with the following, although for some items (such as food) you may want to seek expert advice:

- Food and feeding equipment such as bowls
- Bedding
- Securing your yard
- Providing [safe outdoor access](#) for cats such as an enclosure or specialised fences that prevent cats from escaping
- Enclosures for small companion animals
- Identification including ID tags and collars and leashes for dogs
- Specific items for cats such as litter, litter trays, scratching posts, climbing and hiding spaces
- Toys
- Grooming and dental equipment
- Appropriate carrier or crates for veterinary visits or travel

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☐ Search

After all that soul searching and preparation, it's time to start looking for your new family member! This is the fun part, and adopting through the RSPCA makes it easy. You can initially search [online](#) by entering the state where you live and the type of companion animal you're looking for. There's also an advanced search feature for preferred colour, sex, and whether you're looking for a senior or an animal with special needs.

☐ Adoption process

The [RSPCA adoption process](#) usually starts by completing an adoption application form and providing information about your home, such as the state of your yard and fencing, and evidence that the property owner permits you to keep a pet if you live in a rental property.

The next step is to book an appointment to talk with shelter staff about the animal you wish to adopt. Animals are not put on hold, so it's best to act quickly. Another way to adopt is to start by being a foster carer. The RSPCA always needs [volunteers](#) and there are many happy stories of '[foster failures](#)' (volunteer carers who ended up permanently homing the pets they cared for).

In some cases, staff may guide you towards a different choice based on a better match between your lifestyle and the animal's unique needs, so it's important to keep an open mind. Most adoptions are successful but the RSPCA has a [policy](#) of always accepting back any animals they've previously found homes for. If you're the lucky new owner of an adopted pet, shelter staff will provide you with information such



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as evidence of vaccination, microchip details, a change of registration form, adoption certificate and advice about how to register your companion animal with the local council.

☐ Pet insurance

Taking out pet insurance for your new family member gives you peace of mind knowing you can seek veterinary care for injury or illness without worrying as much about the cost. If you're with [RSPCA Pet Insurance](#), a portion of first-year premiums will go to the RSPCA helping other animals in need of a home.

Many people ask whether they can insure adopted pets and the answer is predominantly yes, depending their age. When making an initial claim, you may need to provide a shelter adoption certificate. In cases where the shelter has no record of an animal's type or date of birth, insurers will accept the estimate of a veterinarian who examines the pet.

These days, more and more people are choosing to adopt when they feel ready to bring an animal into their home. Once you've made that decision, adopting through the RSPCA will put you in the hands of experts in animal care who can provide ongoing support as needed. If you have any questions, your veterinarian is also there to assist you along the way. Based on the accounts of other adoptive pet parents, the steps you take to find the right pet for you and your family will be more than worth it. Enjoy!

For more information call
1300 855 150
between 8am - 8pm Monday
to Friday (AEST).