

# DON'T SHOP.. ADOPT!

Hey, Kat! We're heading to the pet store to buy a rabbit. Want to come along?

Uh, Fin? Shelters have lots of homeless rabbits. You should adopt instead.

BC SPCA shelters are filled with unwanted animals, including rabbits and other small animals such as guinea pigs, gerbils and hamsters. There is no need to buy one from a pet store! Make the BC SPCA your first adoption option instead.

**Step 5:** Once you have been approved, you will be asked to pay the adoption fee. Prices vary depending on the type of animal. Staff will also answer any care questions you have. The BC SPCA website - [spca.bc.ca](http://spca.bc.ca) - has more detailed care information. Then you will be able to take your new pet home!

**Step 4:** Fill out an adoption form. The staff will ask you a few questions such as: Does anyone in your family have allergies? Do you have a veterinarian? Does the building where you live allow you to have pets? This may seem like a lot of information, but staff just wants to make sure you will be the perfect forever home.

You're right, Kat! Adopting was easy.

And bonus, Fin - your new pets are already fixed!

Since there are already so many unwanted animals, the BC SPCA ensures all dogs, cats and rabbits are spayed or neutered as part of the adoption.

Just fill out the adoption application. Once approved, you'll get to take them home!

They're so friendly. What's next, Kat?

**Step 3:** Ideally, bring the whole family so that everyone has a chance to meet the new family member. Getting a pet is a family decision and a family responsibility. If your family wants to adopt a dog, but you already have one at home, the shelter will want the two dogs to meet before they finalize the adoption - so bring your pooch!

**Step 2:** Visit the shelter to view the animals. For cats, you will meet individual cats in cages and groups of cats in rooms called communal cat rooms. Dogs are usually in kennels. Most shelters have a special "get acquainted" room for you to spend some quiet time with a dog you are interested in. Rabbits and other small animals are normally in a separate area. There are lots to choose from!

**Step 1:** You can begin your search for a new companion right at home! Check out [spca.bc.ca/adoptme](http://spca.bc.ca/adoptme) to see all of the animals available for adoption at BC SPCA shelters across the province. Each animal will have a profile page. Most profiles have a picture and a short description to let you know a bit about the animal.

Adopt? Sounds complicated.

Adopting is easy, Fin. I'll show you.

Hey, these two rabbits sound perfect.

A bonded pair. So cute!

Not sure what adoption is all about? Shelter staff and volunteers will help you find the best match for your lifestyle. This means they will need to know a lot about you and your family. Then they will help you find the perfect cat, dog, rabbit, guinea pig, rat or other companion you are looking for.



**Does everyone in your family want a dog?**  
Dogs become family members! Everyone should agree with the decision to get one.

**Does your family know how to care for a dog?**

Learn as much as you can before you bring a dog home. This guide provides some basic care information. You can find out more from care books, veterinarians, animal shelter staff and people you know who have dogs.

**Are you allowed to have a dog where you live?** Unfortunately, not all buildings allow dogs. Some places are pet friendly but have restrictions on how big a dog you can keep.

**What is your family's schedule like?** Dogs need a dependable routine. They have to be fed, walked and played with every day. Families that are gone all day and then out again in the evening would leave a dog home alone too long.

**Do you have a particular breed in mind?** Some people are drawn to a certain breed because they have seen one in a movie or on television, or read about one in a book. Do your research first! Talk to people who have the breed you are interested in. Find out what the dogs are really like to live with. See whether the breed has any health issues.

Above all, keep an open mind! Mixed-breed dogs make awesome pets, too.

# Companions for Life

## Questions to ask yourself before you get a dog

Bringing a dog into your family is a big decision. As his guardian, you will be responsible for taking good care of him for his whole life — 11 years on average. It means walking him in the pouring rain. Cleaning up his messes. Waking up early on the weekends to let him out.

It also means playing hide-and-go-seek together. Reading a book while he dozes beside you. Watching him wrestle with his favourite dog friends. Coming home from school each day to a wagging tail and wet tongue.

Being a dog guardian is both work AND fun. Is your family ready to make the commitment?

**Do you have any other pets?** Not all dogs get along with animals such as cats and vice versa. Your home should be a safe and comfortable place for all your pets.

**Where should you get your dog?** Make the **BC SPCA** your first adoption option! BC SPCA shelters have dogs of all different ages, colours, sizes and shapes to choose from — even purebreds. Check out our adoptable listings at [bcpetsearch.com](http://bcpetsearch.com).

You can also find your new companion through a breed rescue or responsible breeder. Visit [findingfido.ca](http://findingfido.ca) to learn how to spot a good breeder — and avoid puppy mills. Puppy mills are places where dogs are bred in large numbers and sold through pet stores or on the internet just to make money. The dogs are often kept in very poor conditions. Most do not receive the medical care or socialization they need to be good companions.

**\*Can your family afford a dog?** Think beyond the adoption fee! Supplies to prepare your home for a dog will cost at least \$200. Then there are ongoing expenses such as food, license fees, pet insurance and veterinary care. These will cost around \$1,400 a year. Setting some money aside for unexpected expenses is a good idea too.

**How old a dog should you get?** Puppies are a blast! They are also a **TON** of work to socialize and train. As a dog grows up, his personality develops. So you know a little more about what you are getting into with an older dog compared to a puppy.

**What dog personality will suit your family?** Dogs have different personalities. Some are shy and anxious, while others are excitable and outgoing. Some are very people focused. Others are more independent. Choosing a dog based on his personality rather than his looks tends to lead to a better relationship.



# The **5** Freedoms for Felines

Cats are often said to have nine lives. But we know, in reality, cats have only one life – and our job as guardians is to make sure they enjoy it!

We can give our cats the best life possible by providing them with the Five Freedoms. The Five Freedoms are a set of animal welfare guidelines used around the world. Each freedom describes a different part of the care required to meet an animal's needs. Taken together, the Five Freedoms show us how to be great cat guardians. 🐾

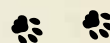
**1 Freedom from hunger and thirst** by giving cats the correct food and fresh water.

**2 Freedom from pain, injury and disease** by providing cats with regular veterinary care and a safe environment.

**3 Freedom from distress** by making sure cats are never neglected or abused, and do not feel scared, anxious, frustrated or depressed.

**4 Freedom from discomfort** by providing cats with a comfortable home that is warm, dry, clean and quiet.

**5 Freedom to express behaviours that promote well-being** by giving cats the chance to play, explore, groom, eat, drink and rest as they choose. 🐾



Remember, as guardians, we are responsible for our cats' health and well-being. And guess what? With all you have learned in this cat care guide, you are ready to begin providing the Five Freedoms to your cats today!