



**Balanced
Canine
Training**

Working to produce
reliable, well-trained dogs
with desirable character
in West Michigan.

Karen Palmer, ACS, ALB

(231) 343-1142

www.BalancedCanineTraining.com
Karen@BalancedCanineTraining.com

“When It Just Doesn’t Work Out”

by Karen Palmer

adapted from: 100 Training Tips For Your Dog

by Kate Delano Conдах,

“Adopting Out A Dog”, (Finding A Home For A Dog)

As a dog owner, one should do everything possible to maintain a positive and lasting relationship between the dog and the family. Seeking out a reputable trainer can solve many behavioral issues, which are a major reason that many dogs are given up to animal shelters. Sometimes, however, it is just not possible to keep a pet or a stray. And sometimes an owner finds that their home is just not suitable for a dog, or changes in lifestyle or with the family’s situation simply cannot permit it. They are then responsible for finding their dog a new home, and the dog’s life literally depends on the right decision.

Dogs are worth money to institutions such as medical schools and pharmaceutical companies, which use them as “guinea pigs” and then put them to death. Others may use dogs in illegal purposes, such as dogfights, or worse. You as a dog owner must be fully aware of these dangers before you place your pet. The following are some important tips to help insure that you will find a good home for your dog.

- ✎ If you have a purebred dog, or one that has strong characteristics of a certain breed, contact a canine registry, such as the American Kennel Club, or a local rescue group for that breed. They often have foster homes set up for such dogs. Breeders should be willing to take their dogs back if the need arises, but if this is not the case, another breeder or breed rescue group may be willing to help. These people should be knowledgeable about the breed and experienced in finding the right homes for such dogs.
- ✎ Charge an adoption fee. Make sure your dog is spayed or neutered before you give it up, or at minimum charge a deposit in addition to an adoption fee to cover such expenses. Another way to handle this is to take a check written to their veterinarian for the procedure as the deposit. You get the check to the vet. yourself, and ask them to report to you when the procedure is done. A general adoption fee can also reduce the risk of someone taking the dog for his or her own profit. If they cannot afford the deposit or fee, they cannot afford the dog!
- ✎ Make up a flyer and post it in veterinarians’ offices. Make up a newspaper advertisement which lists the characteristics of the dog: breed, age, sex, and temperament (good with kids or other pets?). Use the phrase “Try-out basis”.
- ✎ You may get calls from real potential homes, and you may also get calls from simply curious people. You may also hear from con artists, who are experienced and convincing. How do you know which people are right for your dog? Here are some checks to make, and more things to do before making a final decision:

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1. Ask for the name and phone number of their veterinarian, and then call that office. You want to know how long they have been clients for that doctor, and how reliable the veterinarian judges them to be. Also ask about what happened to their last pet (was it run over by a car, put to death for a behavioral issue, etc.), whether they made routine visits, and if they think every member of the family would welcome a dog.
2. Require two pieces of identification, and be sure one has a photograph. Ask for a utility bill with their address on it. They should match.
3. Get a copy of the lease, if they rent, to verify that they are allowed to have a dog.
4. Speak with all members of the household over the phone, and do this before you take the dog to the home. A con artist may not have a "family" to talk to you, though he/she may be describing one. You also want to know if a dog is welcome there by everyone, and if you would want your dog with those particular people.
5. ALWAYS visit the home in person prior to placing a dog there. Look for potential hazards in the structure of the home-- doors which open to a busy street, windows unprotected by guards, dangerous household items where a dog could get at them, cold basement areas where they may intend to keep the dog, holes in a fence, or places where the dog could dig out, etc.
6. If you have any doubts about the people, do not give them the dog! When you find the right person(s), you will feel comfortable about giving them your dog.

Here is a sample list of questions to ask anyone who responds by phone to your advertisements. You want to give them plenty of chances to talk without letting them know what you are looking for in their answers. For example, do not ask, "You don't let your dog run loose, do you?", but rather, "How do you exercise your dog?" Use open-ended questions when possible. Listen for answers that may sound scripted-- a sign that the caller may be a deceitful con artist who has done this before.

1. *Have you ever had a dog before?* Beware of people who rattle off a large number of dogs' names. They may not be a responsible dog owner; they may have gotten rid of them as a matter of inconvenience, or lost them to road accidents.
2. *What happened to that dog?* The dishonest person will be ready with the "right" answer-- the dog died of old age. They were a responsible owner, of course. Don't put too much value in the answer, but ask the question, as you may learn something valuable about the caller.
3. *How do you usually exercise your dog?* The "right" answer is that they do not let the dog off of a leash in public, or unattended in a fenced yard. Be careful if this answer is quickly given. It can be scripted.
4. *Does your husband/wife/housemate like dogs?* If the caller says that they will be the one responsible for the dog, be wary. A spouse or children who are unhappy with a dog or irresponsible for it will not be involved in training or caring for the dog. This is not a happy "pack" situation for your pet.
5. *Is anyone in your family allergic to pet hair?* Be careful if they stumble on this one. You wouldn't want to see them give up your dog a week after they take it because the animal has made someone miserable. They may not be as careful in adopting it out as you are.
6. *Who is your veterinarian? Do you mind if I call him/her for a reference?* Immediately reject someone who objects to these questions. A legitimate person would be happy to give you a reference, to assure you that the dog will go to a good home.
7. *Do you have children, and what ages?* The temperament of the dog should match the family. A shy, deaf, or large, dominant dog should never go to a home with young children, unless the parents are in absolute control of the situation at all times and are completely devoted to

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training both the children and the dog. You want your dog to have a stress-free environment with people it will get along with, and who will care for it properly.

8. *Will you mind showing me two pieces of identification, one with a photograph?* You should hopefully already have a full name; so if they balk at this, rule them out.
9. *What kind of work do you do? What does your spouse do?* If one is away from home a lot, who will look after the dog? Rule out a home where no one would be home for longer than eight or ten hours at a time.
10. *What will you do with the dog when you go on vacation?* If they want to take it along, they could be risking losing or stressing a dog. Are they able and willing to make appropriate plans to travel with their dog? Ask for the name of a boarding kennel or dog sitter if they say they use one, and see if you can use them as a reference also.
11. *Do you mind if I visit the dog periodically after you adopt him?* You will need at least one follow-up, so rule out anyone who objects. This will be in your contract as well.

It is highly advisable to write out an adoption agreement. This should include the date, both person's names and addresses, and a thorough description of the dog. The following are further tips to consider putting into such a contract:

- 🐕 They should agree to return the dog to you in the event that they can no longer keep it.
- 🐕 Under no circumstances will they give the dog away or sell it to another person or organization.
- 🐕 If they move, they must notify you of their new address and phone number.
- 🐕 They agree to be fully responsible for the safety and well being of the dog, including routine veterinary care. If any injury, loss, or death occurs, they should notify you immediately.
- 🐕 If necessary, add a spay/ neuter requirement, with a deadline for the procedure.
- 🐕 They also agree to hold you blameless from any and all claims of liability for the conduct of the dog once they take possession.
- 🐕 This contract is binding and enforceable by civil law. Both must sign, and include all appropriate personal information.

You can write to the USDA for a list of federally licensed animal dealers in your state. The address is:
USDA Docket Reprints
VS REAC
Room 266 FB
6505 Belcrest Road
Hyattsville, MD 20712.

Check the person's name against the list.