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▲ *The cost to adopt a dog may be anywhere from free to \$1,000 depending on the shelter or rescue, although typically the range is \$100 to \$500. Murphy Brown's \$250 adoption fee from a rescue helped the rescue continue running and saving other dogs.*

what else is required?

Nearly all organizations require prospective adopters to fill out applications and sign adoption contracts. The process usually moves quickly in shelters where dogs are at risk. "We have a lot of shelters that simply talk to peo-

ple," Lindsay says. "Maybe they get your name, address, phone number and email, but that's all they really need. Then a sit-down conversation about the kind of dog for your lifestyle."

Rescues may have a lengthier process requiring home visits, references and background checks. There may be stricter policies prohibiting young children in the home, electric fences and dog doors. Some require fenced-in yards, fences around swimming pools and mandatory training.

Dogs often live in foster homes until they're adopted, where foster parents observe their behavior, and teach basic commands and potty training. "Rescues might take more time to help match you with a dog," Marc says. "They tend to have more time with the animals, and sometimes people want that because it helps them figure out what they want."

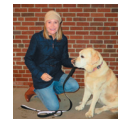
why you should adopt

When you adopt a dog, you're not only saving that animal's life — you're

also saving other dogs. Adopting from a shelter that euthanizes for space reasons frees up kennels, potentially sparing other dogs. "The crisis for animals is at the highest that we've seen in years," Lindsay says.

And adopting from a rescue may open a spot in a foster home and allow a foster parent to take another dog at risk in a shelter. "Shelters and rescues need people more than ever," Marc says.

Dorothy says choosing adoption not only helped save the lives of her dogs, but the love and companionship she received in return changed her life forever. "Don't discount the discount dog," she says. "That rescue dog could be the best dog you ever had." 🐾



Mary Schwager, "Watchdog Mary," is a television and print journalist. She has won 17 Emmy awards for investigative and consumer reporting and several honors from the Dog Writers Association of America. Find her at watchdogmary.com.



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What does it cost to be a Dog Parent?

Pet-sitting site rover.com found that pet parents spent about \$1,188 on their dogs annually.

Budget for the basics:

- ✓ Food
- ✓ Annual veterinary checkup
- ✓ Vaccines and heartworm tests
- ✓ Heartworm prevention
- ✓ Flea/tick prevention
- ✓ Pet bed, toys
- ✓ Leash and harness

If your dog develops a health condition or has a medical emergency, that could cost thousands of dollars in veterinary care.

Consider optional expenses like training, grooming, dog daycare and pet insurance.

Luxury splurges: One dog mom installed central air conditioning and bought an SUV so her pup would be more comfortable.

Melissa Kauffman, the group editorial director for *Dogster* and *Catster* magazines, bought a trailer to take her dogs on vacation. "It's a lifestyle, not just a little addition to the family," she says.