

Should I Rehome My Dog?

A compassionate, step-by-step worksheet for owners facing a hard decision

If you are reading this, you are probably worried about your dog and worried about your family too. That already says something good about you. Thinking about rehoming is not a failure, and it is not automatically the right answer either. This worksheet helps you look honestly at what your dog needs, what your household can realistically give right now, and what your options are.



This is a thinking tool, not a verdict. No score can decide this for you. The goal is to slow down, get the facts out of your head and onto paper, and help you (and anyone else in your home) talk about it clearly.

How To Use It

- Work through the four parts in order. Most people need 20 to 30 minutes.
- Be honest about right now, not what you hope things will be like someday.
- If others share care of the dog (a partner, older children), have them fill it out separately, then compare your answers.

Part 1: Rule Out Fixable Problems First

Many dogs are surrendered for problems that had a practical fix. Check off what you have already tried. Anything left unchecked is worth a real attempt before you decide.

- ☐ **Vet visit.** Sudden changes in behavior (accidents, aggression, destructiveness, anxiety) can be caused by pain or illness.
- ☐ **Qualified professional help.** A certified trainer or veterinary behaviorist, not just online videos.
- ☐ **Routine reset.** Set daily walk, feeding, and play times, and a quiet retreat space (crate, pen, or room) the dog can use undisturbed.
- ☐ **Household agreement.** Assign responsibilities to each family member, write them down, and post them.
- ☐ **Outside help.** Ask friends, relatives, neighbors, a dog walker, day care, or a sitter for regular support.

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- ☐ **Cost help.** Look into low-cost vet clinics, pet food banks, or training assistance if money is tight.
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- ☐ **Honest talk with the kids.** Explain the dog's needs in age-appropriate terms and what you can and can't do as a family.

Part 2: What Your Dog Needs Vs. What Your Home Can Give

For each statement, mark how true it is **right now**. Circle one number.

0 = Not true, 1 = Sometimes, 2 = Often, 3 = Almost always

#	Statement	0	1	2	3
DAILY CARE					
1	My dog often goes without enough exercise, play, or time outdoors.	0	1	2	3
2	My dog is alone or ignored for long stretches most days.	0	1	2	3
3	Basic care (feeding, walks, vet visits, grooming) gets missed or causes arguments.	0	1	2	3
4	No one in the household reliably takes responsibility for the dog's daily care.	0	1	2	3

SAFETY AND WELLBEING					
5	My dog has bitten, snapped at, or seriously frightened someone, and I cannot reliably prevent it. (See safety note below.)	0	1	2	3
6	My dog seems stressed, fearful, or unhappy most days (hiding, destructive, constant barking, withdrawn).	0	1	2	3
7	In our busy home, the dog is often grabbed, teased, or has no safe place to retreat.	0	1	2	3
8	My dog has medical or behavioral needs I cannot currently meet.	0	1	2	3

HOUSEHOLD CAPACITY

9	Our children's different needs (schedules, school, medical or developmental needs) leave little time or energy for the dog.	0	1	2	3
10	Stress, illness, disability, depression, or burnout in the adults makes the dog's care feel overwhelming.	0	1	2	3
11	The dog was mostly acquired or kept to please a child, and that child is not doing the care, or interest has faded.	0	1	2	3
12	I cannot currently afford the food, vet care, or training my dog needs.	0	1	2	3

My total score: _____ / 36

Safety note (statement 5). If you marked a 2 or 3 on statement 5, please contact your vet or a veterinary behaviorist promptly, whatever your total score. Keep the dog safely separated from children and visitors in the meantime. Be fully honest about bite history with any rescue or new owner; this protects the dog, too.

Part 3: Step Back And Look At The Whole Picture

Answer **Yes**, **No**, or **Not sure**, and jot a few words if you like.

Question	Yes	No	Not Sure
If I honestly picture my dog's average day, is it a good life for a dog?	☐	☐	☐
Am I keeping the dog mainly out of guilt, or to avoid disappointing someone (a child, a partner, myself)?	☐	☐	☐
Is the dog's care falling on one stressed person who is already stretched thin?	☐	☐	☐
Would this dog likely get more attention, exercise, and calm in a different home?	☐	☐	☐
If our situation improved in 3 to 6 months, would keeping the dog be realistic? (A temporary crunch is different from a lasting mismatch.)	☐	☐	☐
Have all the adults in the home been honest with each other about how this is going?	☐	☐	☐

Are my children's wishes being weighed against the dog's welfare, or has the dog become the one adjusting to everyone else?

☐☐☐

A Note On Kids, Fairness, And The Dog

A dog cannot say "this is too much." It can only show it through stress, withdrawal, or behavior. Wanting to make your children happy is a loving instinct, but a dog is a living being with needs of its own, and a home stretched across several children's needs may not have room left for one more dependent. The same is true when a caregiver is dealing with their own health or mental health challenges: needing help is human and nothing to be ashamed of, and it is also fair to ask whether the dog is getting what it needs. Both things can be true at once.

Write it out

What my dog needs most that I am struggling to provide:

What I have already tried:

What would have to change for this to work:

Part 4: What Your Results May Mean

0 to 9	Lower strain	Your dog's needs are mostly being met. Focus on the gaps: revisit Part 1, add support, and consider whether a specific problem (not the whole situation) needs attention.
10 to 20	Moderate strain	There is a real mismatch, but it may be fixable. Schedule a call with us for our professional input, ask for help, and set a review date 30 to 60 days out with specific changes to try. If little improves by then, revisit rehoming seriously.

21 to 36	High strain	Your dog's needs are likely going unmet in a lasting way. Rehoming may be the kindest choice for everyone, including the dog. Talk with your vet or a reputable rescue about next steps.
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Also weigh your Part 3 answers. A moderate score paired with several "Yes" answers to guilt or lopsided care may point toward rehoming; a high score caused by a short-term crisis may point toward temporary help such as fostering, boarding, or family support.

If You Decide To Rehome: Doing It Well

1. **See your vet first.** Get records and an honest picture of health and behavior. It helps the dog get matched well.
2. **Choose your route.** Options include a trusted friend or relative, a breed-specific or foster-based rescue, or your local shelter. Ask any organization about its intake process, wait times, and how it handles dogs with behavior concerns.
3. **Avoid "free to a good home" listings.** Unscreened giveaways put dogs at risk. A small rehoming fee and a screening process help protect your dog.
4. **Write an honest profile.** Include temperament, triggers, medical needs, favorite things, and what kind of home would suit the dog. Honesty prevents returns and heartbreak.
5. **Screen adopters.** Ask for a vet reference, have several meetings (ideally including everyone in the home and any other pets), and use a written agreement.
6. **Make the handoff smooth.** Send records, food, a favorite toy, and something that smells like home. Update the microchip registration.
7. **Talk honestly with your children.** Use clear, age-appropriate words. Avoid stories like "gone to a farm." Let them say goodbye, and share updates if the new family is open to it.
8. **Give yourself room to grieve.** Guilt and sadness are normal, even when the decision is right.

Where To Find Help

- **Your veterinarian** or a board-certified veterinary behaviorist for medical and behavior concerns.
- **Certified trainers and behavior consultants:** search the directories at ccpdt.org or iaabc.org.
- **Training and rehoming guidance:** aspca.org and humanesociety.org publish free resources; your local humane society or SPCA can explain surrender options in your area.
- **If you are struggling emotionally:** in the U.S., you can call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) any time, or talk with your doctor about support. Caring for yourself is part of caring for your dog.

Whatever you decide, you can be someone who loves their dog and still recognizes when a dog needs something different. Choosing carefully, honestly, and kindly is what matters most.