



Conversation Based Adoption Guide

So you have an application for your foster. Now what?

We encourage you to have a phone call with applicants as the conversation can flow better than on email but you are welcome to start with an email asking when a good time to chat would be.

Review the application:

****Please take note of the topics they checked on their application as something they are wanting to learn more about.****

For example: potty training, animal introductions, feeding schedule, etc.

Discuss these topics as they relate to your foster animal to help for a better transition.

If there is a topic you do not feel experienced or comfortable talking about, talk to your application manager.

Keep your foster in mind

- Your particular foster's current needs, both behavioral and medical. Really try to be open on what those are without putting any pets or people at risk
 - For example, a dog who cannot live with cats without causing harm, a cat who does not tolerate any children in the home, a very noisy or anxious pet who may not be a pet for shared halls or shared walls, an animal they intend to keep outdoors all the time
- Be open to learning about them as well as educating them in a non-condescending way
- Active listening and responding will ensure a much better fit for your pet than reading off from a script or thinking about what to say next while they are talking
- Be open and transparent about the vetting/medical that your foster animal has gone through, or has yet to go through, to ensure that it is something the adopter is willing and open to learning more about and moving forward with.

****Note please ask your foster manager if you have any questions about the vetting they've received so you feel comfortable talking about it.**

Do you feel awkward and don't know how to start the conversation? Here's an idea for you:

- Start by telling them your name
- How long you have been with Ruff Start
- How long have you been fostering Fluffy?
- Ask if it's ok to have a conversation about what they're looking for in a pet to see if they think **Fluffy** might be a fit, or if there's a better time for them.

Some examples of open ended questions to start with:

- Tell me a little bit about what you're looking for in a pet or what drew you to apply for **Fluffy**.
- Who are they adopting for? (themselves, partner, kids, parents, "gift", etc)
- Tell me about who else lives in your home. (Human and animal residents)
- What does a typical day look like in your household?

It's important to share more about your foster than was in the bio:

*"I want to make sure that you feel any questions that you have on **Fluffy** beyond their online bio are answered. Let me tell you some additional info about them and then you can ask questions as you think of them."*

- Always start with the good. "**Fluffy** has been amazing while we've had them because..."
- Share a day in the life of **Fluffy** currently
- Share info that is missing from their bio or may require more details (i.e., how they do with other animals, what vaccinations they have had or may need after adoption, crate/potty-training, etc.)
- Share any "quirks" the animal may have and how you overcome them in your home
- Answer questions as you go and help them envision what that might look like in their home

Pro Tip! Answer their questions in the order that they ask them; they're telling you what's most important to them.

Other things to discuss (if needed)

- Slow introductions to resident dogs/cats/kids
- Do they have a place they could set up in their home where **Fluffy** can settle in away from the rest of the household (decompress)? (explain what that might look like)
- Explain that all animals have an adjustment period and what that might look like
- Have you had an animal like **Fluffy** before? (Respect their experience level by just touching on topics they seem familiar with and spending more time on those that they seem less comfortable with)
 - Discuss their children/other animals experience level with an animal like **Fluffy** will everyone welcome a new addition or will it take time to adjust
- **Discuss any vetting that may need to be finished up before eligible for adoption and any known vetting they will need after adoption.** ** PLEASE ask your foster manager any vetting questions you have so you feel comfortable talking or explaining it to the potential adopter.
- Talk about current food and how to transition to different food

Wrap up

- Ask if they think the pet sounds like a good fit for their home. If yes, ask if they would like to schedule a meet and greet.
- If the conversation has shown that the pet and person are not a match and they acknowledge that, thank them for their time and ask if you can share what their ideal pet would be to see if another foster has a good match. You can post in the FB group to get other fosters opinions on possible matches.
- If the conversation has shown they are not a match and they do not acknowledge that, please consider the reasons that you do not believe it is the best fit. Is it something that can be changed/taught, or is it a circumstance that cannot be changed? Please refer to the Application Manager if you are not comfortable proceeding with adoption but the applicant is wanting to proceed.

Dogs:

If they do want to proceed with a meet and greet, proceed to schedule logistics and discuss how to set up **Fluffy** for success at that meeting. Use your discretion on who all should be at the meet and greet. It is not required that everyone in the home is in attendance if you are comfortable proceeding without all people and pets present.

You can also discuss same day adoption at this point too if you are comfortable with it. Let them know you'll text/email them a confirmation for the time and location and that they can feel free to call/text/email you back if they think of any questions between now and then.

Cats:

Because cats will not necessarily be everyone's best friend upon first meeting or may hide, we recommend that you do a virtual meet and greet via zoom or facetime or even a phone call and share pictures and videos. Try to get through the likes, dislikes, a typical day and then how to set that cat up for success in the new home. If you and the applicant want to move forward after this virtual meeting, go ahead and schedule that adoption and have them pick up the cat after the paperwork is signed and the cat is paid for. Feel good that you have provided the info and tools they need to slowly introduce that cat to the new home.

Final thoughts:

If you are comfortable at adoption, please let the adopters know that you would be happy to be a resource for them after adoption.

- *"I've really grown to love **Fluffy** during their stay with me. If you ever need anything after adoption I am happy to help. If you have any struggles or questions about them after adoption please don't hesitate to reach out. Or even if they are doing really well and you just want to tell me how they are doing I would love that too."*

Troubleshooting

- **The applicant would like to keep their animal as an outdoor only pet.**
 - Ask about the concerns they have with keeping **Fluffy** indoors.
 - Offer information to help manage or alleviate these concerns.
 - If the pet selected has an indoor-only history, explain that the transition could add some risks to the pet's health or safety that need to be considered.

- If they are adamant they want an outdoor-only animal, please refer to your Application Manager for next steps.
- **The applicant would like to declaw**
 - Explain what declawing is for cats
 - Explain the risks that come with declawing and offer suggestions for other ways to prevent unwanted scratching
 - If they are adamant they are wanting to declaw, refer to the Applications Manager for suggestions on cats who are already declawed in our care that may be a better fit
- **The applicant is getting the animal as a gift for someone else.**
 - Giving of pets as gifts should only be pursued if the recipient has expressed a sustained interest in owning one, and the ability to care for it responsibly.
 - Ask a few questions to learn more about what the customer knows about the intended recipient:
 - Has this person mentioned getting a companion animal (dog, cat, other)?
 - Is this the type/breed/personality you think the recipient would choose for themselves?
 - Does this person have the time and means to responsibly care for this pet?
 - If the recipient is a child, the child's parents should be aware and ready and eager to assume care for the animal.