

Addressing Adoption and Foster Challenges: Proactive Approaches for Positive Outcomes

Adopt A Pet Tail Talk

April 2025



Presenters



Bailey Schroeder

Co-Founder & CEO
Petcademy



Cole Wakefield

Executive Director
Good Shepherd Humane Society

**Have you had animals returned due to
behavioral issues?**



The Agenda

1. Explore common behavioral questions from adopters and fosters
2. Review recommendations to make for each of these common questions
3. Develop a strategy for providing behavioral support even with limited resources and bandwidth





Percentage of Returns That Were Due to Behavioral Reasons



34.7%
Cats

55.9%
Dogs





 Petcademy

Adopters & Fosters Have Questions About Their Pets' Behavior

"How do I get her to stay out of my **Christmas tree**?" - Jenna

"What's the best way to **litter box** train a cat she's not a fan of it."
- J'Quan

"I still have problems **keeping my cat off of the kitchen countertop** and I've tried almost every option. How can I keep him off?" - Isabella

"Hi! How do I get her to **not climb on me or scratch me**? Her nails are very sharp." - Athena

"He is very rambunctious. We are **extremely tired**. How can we get Sami to settle down?" - Sarah



"How do I get my dog to **stop chewing** on wires and shoes? How do I **crate train** her when she hates getting in the crate and refuses to get into it." - Zachary

"**Jumping, taking food**, trying to **escape**." - Irene

"Our newly adopted dog **won't sleep in her crate**. She will just **bark** and bark." - Marie

"How do you recommend going about **leash training**? And how do you go about getting him to calm down around new people?" - Billy

Let's focus on:

1. Common questions people ask
2. How to best answer them





What do you think are the most common behavioral questions from

Dog Parents

Most Common Behavior Questions - Dog Parents

1. House Training

2. Anxiety

3. Core Behaviors

4. Leash Walking

Most common questions from dog parents

Leash Walking

“Is it a good idea to use an **adjustable leash** when training to walk? What is a **good method to walk** with me?”

- Ariel asking about Hazel



Most common questions from dog parents

Leash Walking

Recommendations

- Use a non-retractable leash with a front clip harness
- Practice walking inside with no distractions
- Use rewards to encourage your dog to walk in the magic zone

Additional resources: [Petcademy lesson on loose leash walking](#)

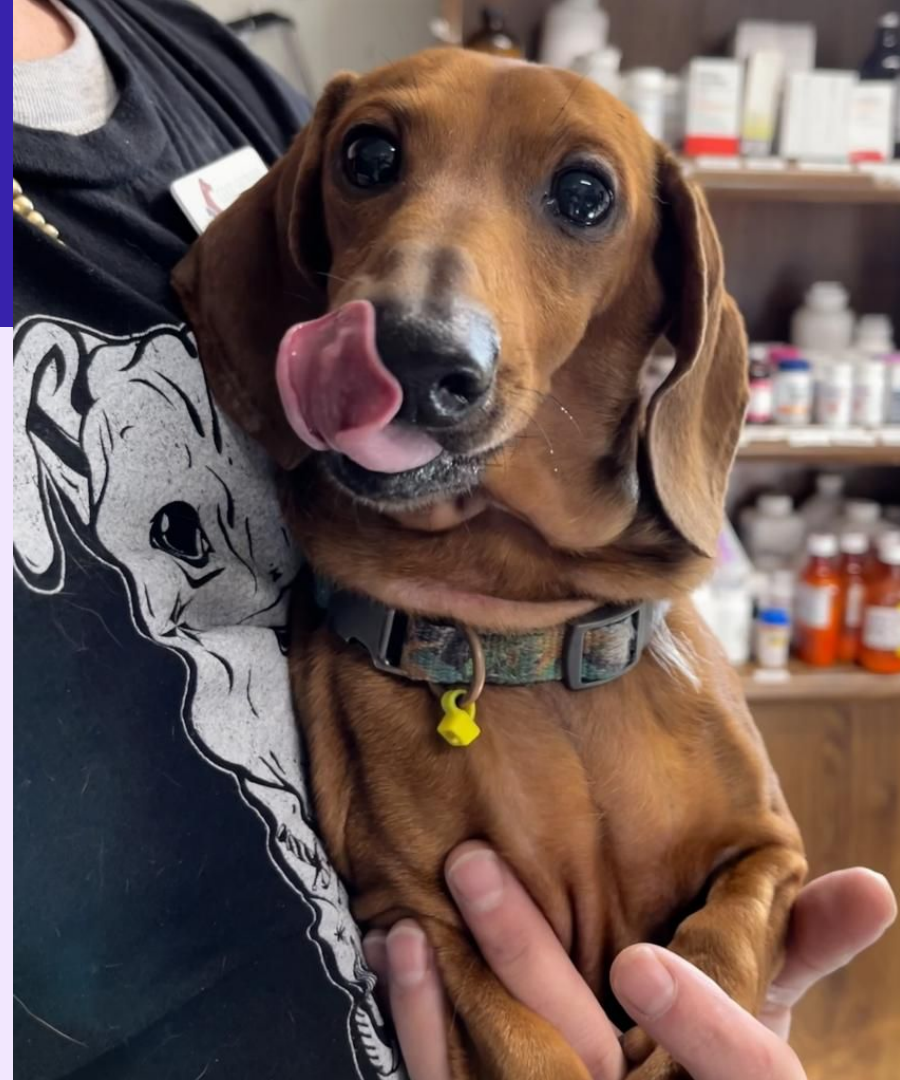


Most common questions from dog parents

Anxiety

“Why does my dog **bark as soon as I leave the apartment?** How can you get them to stop this?”

- Clarissa asking about Bandit



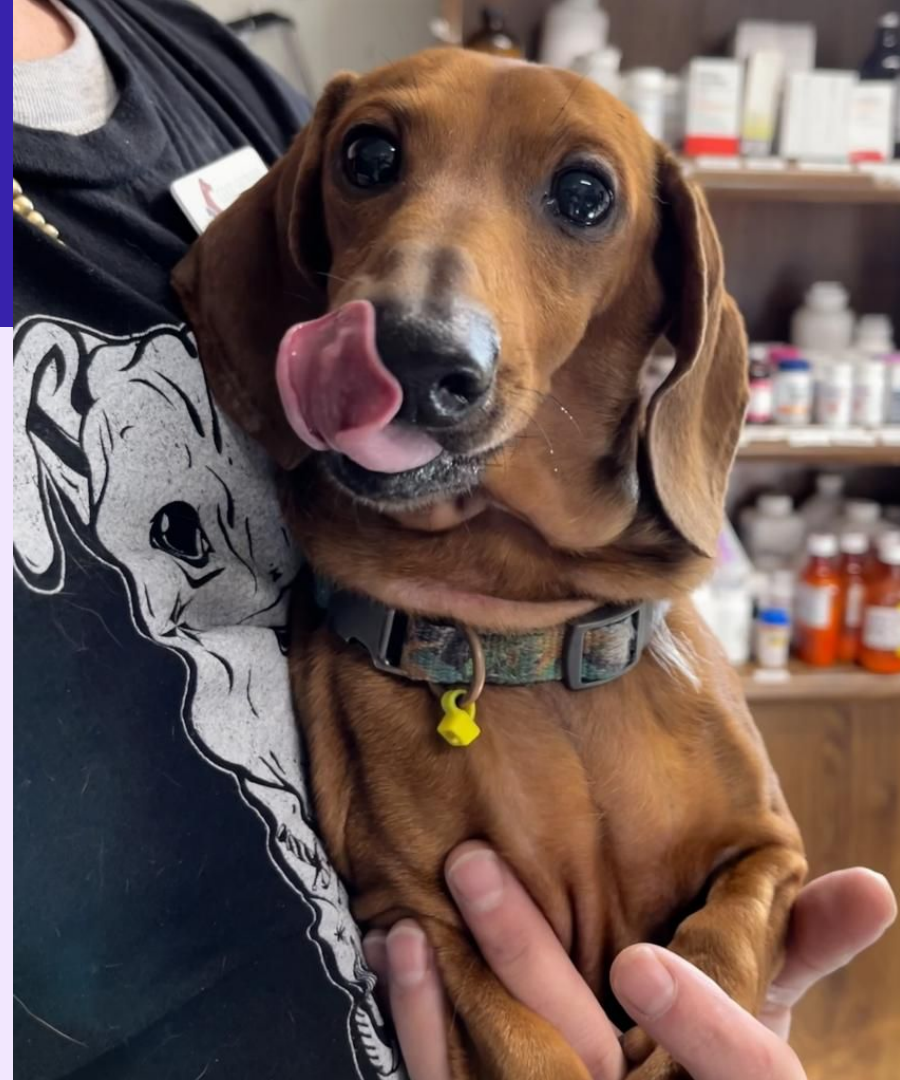
Most common questions from dog parents

Anxiety

Recommendations

- Normalize and validate feelings
- Create a predictable schedule
- Be mindful of alone time + pair departures with something your dog loves
- Manage the environment with crate/ baby gate and calming music/white noise

Additional resources: [Petcademy lesson on separation anxiety](#)



Most common questions from dog parents

House Training

"I'm needing help to get her to **potty** just outside. We take her outside often but she still **potties in the house.**"

- Ashley asking about Sammy



Most common questions from dog parents

House Training

Recommendations

- Create a consistent schedule w/ lots of opportunities to go out
- Reduce the area you need to monitor by using a crate/gate
- Reward heavily when your dog goes in the right spot
- Use an enzyme cleaner to clean-up accidents
- Be boring!

Additional resources: [Petcademy lesson on house training](#)





What do you think are the most common questions for:

Cat Parents

Most Common Behavioral Questions - Cat Parents

1. Cats Not Getting Along

2. Fear & Hiding

3. Litter Box

4. Aggression

Most common questions from cat parents

Fear & Hiding

“Foxy is just very shy and **likes to stay hidden**. We are trying to let her know that she is safe and everything is going to be ok.”

- Tamara asking about Foxy



Most common questions from cat parents

Fear & Hiding

Recommendations

- Review the 3:3:3 rule
- Never force them out of their safe space
- Allow them to come to you for affection
- Reward your cat for socializing (no matter how briefly the socializing may be)

Additional resources: [Petcademy lesson on helping new cat settle](#)



Most common questions from cat parents

Litter Box

“Will my cat be able to **find the litter box** on his own?”

- Lexi asking about Bo



Most common questions from cat parents

Litter Box

Recommendations

- Confirm there isn't a medical issue
- Place the litter boxes in low traffic, easily accessible areas of your home
- Have 1 litter box, plus 1, for every cat in your home
- Scoop the litter box daily, deep clean every 2 weeks
- Use an enzyme cleaner to clean-up accidents

Additional resources: [Petcademy's lesson on litter box issues](#)



Most common questions from cat parents

Aggression

“He’s only been around other cats, no human interaction and **he bites us and scratches**, making me bleed every day since we adopted him. Any suggestions on how to make him stop?”

- Bill asking about Cheddar



Most common questions from cat parents

Aggression

Recommendations

- Don't force your cat to interact and allow them to come to you
- Keep petting sessions short – pause, observe, reward
- Provide outlets for natural stalking and hunting behaviors through play
- Schedule play sessions in the evening and early morning when they're most active

Additional resources: Petcademy lessons on biting during [playtime](#) and [petting](#)



Most common questions from cat parents

Cats not getting along

“She is having a very **difficult time adjusting** to my other cat”

- Paul about Stella adjusting to life with Shadow



Most common questions from cat parents

Cats not getting along

Recommendations

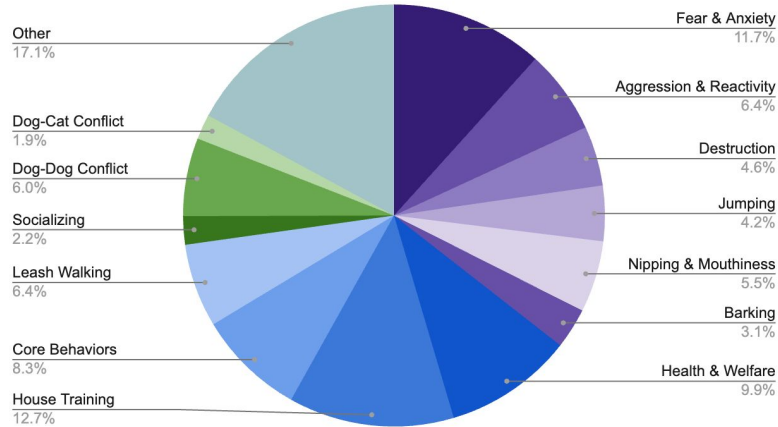
- Keep the cats separated and re-introduce them slowly
- Move at the pace of the slower animal
- Provide separate resources
- Reward through every encounter

Additional resources: Petcademy lessons on [introducing cats](#) and [cats not getting along](#)

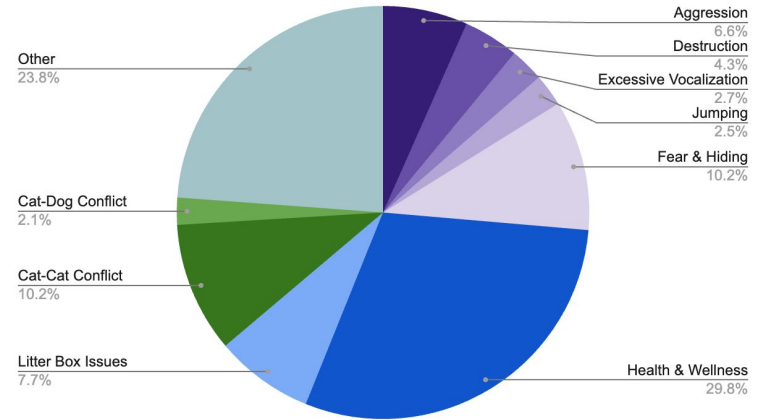


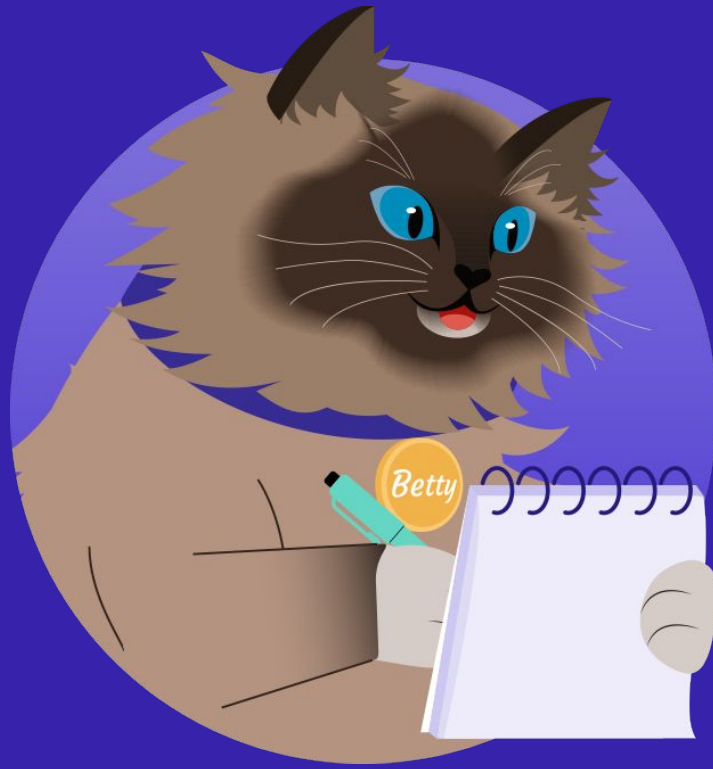
Questions Organized by frequency

Dog Parents



Cat Parents





Building A Strategy

Strategy: Pre-Adoption Counseling

1. Discuss the home environment
2. Talk about decompression and 3:3:3 rule
3. Set expectations and disclose any known behavior issues
4. Provide materials to tackle most common issues and anything specific to the animal they're bringing home
5. Establish communication channels



Strategy: Post Adoption Support

1. Proactively reach out 2-3 days post-adoption
2. Automate your proactive outreach
3. Create draft responses for most common questions
4. Establish a dedicated location to receive pet parent questions
5. Partner with a company like Petcademy to handle your post adoption support



Key takeaways

1. The most common questions for dog parents are lower severity
2. The most common questions for cat parents have to do with multi-cat households
3. Proactively set expectations and provide resources during pre-adoption counseling session
4. Accept that pre-adoption counseling often isn't enough
5. Implement a strategy to efficiently receive and respond to pet parent questions post-adoption

Questions?

