

## How to Find Your Perfect Dog at the Maricopa County Animal Shelter

“My Perfect Dog” means different things to different people. For me a “Perfect Dog” means the dog that fits your personality, Lifestyle, Energy Level and Mental Image.

The first step to a Happy Relationship is to make a list of Characteristics you are looking for. This list can be written down, or just formulated in your brain.

**Here are some things to consider:**

- Size – What size dog do you want? Small, Medium, large?
- Breed- Do you have a certain breed in mind? Looking up the characteristics of the dog breed you are looking at is a good (but not perfect) way to find out how your dog is going to act.
- Energy Level – Want a couch potato Dog or a Dog to run with? Finding a dog that matches your energy level is vital.
- Personality – Want an outgoing dog that likes everyone? Or want a dog that is more reserved or even anti-social?

Now that you have a list, how do you know which dog at the Shelter fits your criteria?

The Maricopa County Animal Shelter keeps notes on all the dogs in their care, which makes them a GREAT place to adopt a dog from. They also have professional dog assessors who can size up a dog by interacting with them. They have licensed vets that do a general assessment of their health.

**Other good reasons for adopting from the shelter:** All dogs come spayed or neutered, they all have their shots, they are microchipped, they come with a 1 year license, you get one free Vet visit and you have 30 days to decide if the dog is right for you.

**The Best Way to find your New Best Friend** is to look at the County’s Website:

<https://apps.pets.maricopa.gov/AdoptPets> It lists all the dogs that are currently available for adoption. You should use it to find 4 or 5 dogs that meet your criteria. The key is to click on the button marked “Click Here for More Details.” This is where you will find the dogs “Kennel Card.”

The Kennel Card has all the information available to the public about the dog you are looking at. There are 10 things that you want to make sure to pay attentions to:

1. **ANIMAL ID** – Since some of the dogs have the same name, the County Tracks each dog with a Unique Animal ID number. You will want to write down the Animal ID of any dog you are considering.
2. **BREED** – This is what the shelter thinks the dog is. Most often it is a very educated guess based on the dog’s physical characteristics
3. **AGE** – This is also usually an educated guess based on the Dogs teeth and how worn down or covered in tarter they are.
4. **LOCATION** – The County has two shelters and occasionally satellite locations. It is important you go to the right shelter to find your future pet.
5. **LEVEL RATING** – THIS IS POSSIBLY THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ON THE KENNEL CARD. It is a rating given by Professional Behaviorists and it indicates how a dog behaves in the shelter. 1 is

easy going, 3 is not easy going. If you are new to pet ownership, you really want to stick to a Level 1, maybe a 2.

Official Rating explanation is as follows:

## Behavior Test Results Explained

Maricopa County Animal Care & Control

### Kennel Test

For kennel presentation and pull

- **Level 1 (Easy):** Dog is calm, quiet in kennel, or dog settles quickly on approach. Allows handlers to open kennel and leash without issue. Dog walks out of kennel without issue. Allows leash removal.
- **Level 2 (Moderate):** Dog is outside but will come forward with coaxing or is successfully pulled from the backside of the kennel. Dog is barking or jumping in kennel but will settle. Pushes at gate to get out with moderate effort to leash. Ducks head/hides from leash/handler. May need coaxing to exit the kennel once leashed. On return dog may need coaxing (including handler entering kennel) to enter or attempt to quickly exit kennel after being unleashed.
- **Level 3 (Advanced):** Barking/leaping at kennel door, difficult to settle, several attempts to leash. Difficult to remove from kennel due to dog attempting to push/jump through kennel door/escape risk. On return, dog may refuse or resist entering kennel, may attempt to quickly exit kennel after being unleashed or is able to push out.
- **New Hope Only:** Defensively snapping, growling, barking, lunging, baring teeth when attempting to leash. Dog requires specific handling techniques or skilled handling. Unable to remove slip lead without the use of a clip leash. Grabbing at leash, hands, clothing, or on-body equipment on kennel pull/return.
- **Euthanasia:** Unable to safely remove from kennel without the use of advanced equipment/handling techniques. Offensively charging kennel, muzzle punching, barking, lunging, attempting to bite.

### Leash Test

For leash skills or tolerance

- **Level 1 (Easy):** Dog walks in and out of wing/building calmly and easily. Mild pull on leash. Does not fence fight.
- **Level 2 (Moderate):** Dog pulls on leash but is controllable/manageable without special skills or techniques. Dog may be reactive including fence fighting but can be refocused easily. Dog jumps on handler but can be refocused. Dog may start and stop on leash but will continue with coaxing. Dog may have difficulty leaving the building but walks after exiting the building.
- **Level 3 (Advanced):** Dog pulls hard on leash requiring advanced leash techniques, dog fence fights or is erratic while walking and is difficult to interrupt/refocus. Dog will not walk on leash at all and needs an alternative method of movement like cart or crate or in some instances needs to be blanketed/carried. May thrash briefly but able to refocus.
- **New Hope Only:** Dog redirects on handler but does not break skin (pre-bite or near bite). Dog attempts to grab/pull/bite leash repeatedly. Thrashes continually on leash and/or bucket and unable to settle/refocus. Grabbing at leash, hands, clothing, or on-body equipment on kennel pull/return.
- **Euthanasia:** Redirection resulting in bite. Offensively lunging/attempting to bite handler.

### Handling Test

For touch or people sensitivity

- **Level 1 (Easy):** Dog is affiliative. Dog is calm and has a neutral/soft body. Dog allows petting all over and allows a body manipulation. Dog solicits attention.
- **Level 2 (Moderate):** Dog may flinch or be wary but allows leash placement. Dog may be jumpy or aroused. Dog is affiliative and allows handler to approach or approaches handler after coaxing or luring. May jump to solicit attention but settles with verbal cues.
- **Level 3 (Advanced):** Dog may head flip, exhibit piloerection, skin may "crawl," may or may not approach. Dog may stiffen with handling. Dog may be jumping/mouthy or over aroused but able to refocus.
- **New Hope Only:** Dog may show signs of defensive behaviors such as: air snap, lip curl, growl. Dog does not allow touching/fragile/avoidant due to fear/under-socialized. Over-aroused/mouthy and unable to refocus or settle.
- **Euthanasia:** Dog shows signs of offensive behaviors, such as air snap, lip curl, growl, lunging, or attempting to bite.

6. **REQUIREMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS** – There are times when the shelter will set requirements in order to adopt the dog. Things like ONLY DOG, NO CHILDREN UNDER 12. Often people think they are recommendations, but they are requirements and should be taken seriously. The shelter also has recommendations. Those should be strongly considered, so you do not end up with a dog that doesn't fit your situation.
7. **EVALUATION BY STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS** – This is the second most important thing on the kennel card. This is what the staff and volunteers see interacting with the dog you are considering. Reading through the comments will help you get a better idea of the dog's personality. You are looking for things like the dog's energy level, whether there are any notes suggesting it is housetrained, how it gets along with other dogs, whether it likes people.
8. **INTAKE NOTES** – If a dog is found as a stray, the notes may be brief. But if someone surrenders the dog, the notes can be helpful in understanding what the dog is like in a home.

9. **MEDICAL NOTES AND TREATMENTS** – are things that you should show the vet during your one free vet visit. It is also interesting to read through the notes to see if you can see anything of interest; In the attached example you can see the dog has an unhealthy weight.
10. **BITE INFORMATION** – Most dogs are not biters. They usually only bite as a last resort, so if there is a note in this area you want to pay attention to it. Why did the dog bite? Was it injured? Startled? Is the reason for the bite acceptable to you?

### **Heading to the Shelter – How to avoid getting overwhelmed**

Now that you have a list of dogs that fit your criteria, write down their Animal ID numbers and their location. Go to the location of the dog who you think is the best fit.

There are two ways to meet your fuzzy buddy. You can walk through the shelter and look at each dog. Sometimes you will find a dog that “calls to you.” This happens often, but equally often people get overwhelmed by the sheer number of dogs.

To keep from getting overwhelmed, walk through the front door of the shelter and get in line to talk to the person behind the desk. Ask them to meet the dogs on your list. They will have someone to go get the dogs and bring them out to you one at a time. Feel free to talk to this person and ask them questions about the dogs. Often times they have spent time with the dog. You can also ask them whether they think the dog will be a good fit for you, they might or might not offer an opinion; also keep in mind they just met you.

**What to do if you are at the shelter and didn't do your research?** - If you stopped by the shelter just to look around and want to know more about the cute little face on the other side of the gate, you can use your smart phone to scan the QR code on the dogs paperwork. It will bring up the same information I outlined above.

**What if it doesn't work out?** - The County Shelter gives you 30 days to determine whether your temporary house guest is your new family member. You can bring your little charge back within 30 days. They will most likely not give you your money back, but they also won't charge you the typical fee for surrendering a dog. I recommend waiting at least 3 weeks before giving the dog back though. Being in the shelter is a traumatic experience and getting used to a new home is also pretty stressful. It usually takes 3 weeks before your dog's true personality shows through.

**Utilizing the free vet visit** – The county will give you a list of vets who will give your dog 1 free vet visit within 7 days of adoption. You should use it. The vet will take the dogs vitals and answer any questions for you. The free vet visit only covers an assessment and usually not any procedures. **THE BIGGEST THING YOU WANT TO KNOW IS WHETHER THAT DOG HAS ANY ONGOING HEALTH CONCERNS.** If they do, is it something you can live with? If it is not, taking the dog back is an available option.

**Closing thoughts** – Adopting a dog can be the best thing to happen to you, but it is also a long-term commitment. Is your life at a point to take the commitment on? Expectations are also important; you did your research, followed all the tips and your new dog just chewed up your shoes. What happened? The tips above are designed to help you find a dog that is compatible with your lifestyle, but your dog will still need training. You can go to National Petstores for training, or we at Inexpensive Dog Training would be happy to give you a free phone consultation to help your new best friend be all they can be. Contact us at [Training@InexpensiveDogTraining.com](mailto:Training@InexpensiveDogTraining.com)



Name

**GEMMA**

Animal ID <sup>1</sup>  
**A4298417**

Adoption fee  
**\$25**

Breed

**GRAY/WHITE AM PIT BULL TER** <sup>2</sup>

Age <sup>3</sup>  
**8 years**

Sex  
**Female**

Weight  
**74**

Arrived  
**12/18/2023**

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Location

West Kennel, Wing L - 349

4

Level

1

5

This is VERY important

About me

**I've been in a home before. You'll love my sweet people-personality. I'd do best with a family that can continue my weight loss regime, and I'm great on short walks! Grow old with me, the best is yet to be! I'm spayed, vaccinated, microchipped and looking fur love.**

Requirements

6

No requirements

Recommendations

FAMILY  
INTRODUCTION

**Evaluation Comments - This Information Is Observations From Our Staff And Volunteers**

7

leashed. Gemma's personality was playful, gentle, affectionate, curious, excited and Gemma doesn't appear to know any commands. Gemma is not food motivated and does take treats gently. Potty trained

**01/13/2024**

Easy leash placement, walked to PY with slight pull. Once outside door relieved herself, then continued walking to PY. Once inside yard sniff/explored yard and relieved herself. Afterwards went up to handler and solicited attention, Allowed all petting. Walked back to room with slight pull. Easy kennel return, easy leash removal.

**01/08/2024**

Easy pull, seemed interested in other dogs and people. Walks with loose leash, sniffs along the way. Solicits attention from handler. Walked right into kennel, knows 'sit', takes treats gently.

**12/24/2023**

Easy to pull from kennel, Easy to return to kennel, Calm, Somewhat Pulls on Leash, Not interested in toys, Takes treats nicely, Appeared interested when walking past kennels. When in play yard, another dog passed by and Gemma was very interested in other dog - sniffing through fence, loose body, wagging tail. Gemma immediately peed when exiting kennel and may be potty trained. She peed multiple times in play yard.

## Intake Notes 8

**12/18/2023**

How long have you had your pet? OWNER HAD THIS DOG FOR 1 WEEK. HE IS RETURNING THIS DOG DUE TO THE OWNER'S OWN HEALTH ISSUES. THIS PET IS VERY VERY FRIENDLY, BUT THE OWNER HAS OWN PERSONAL HEALTH ISSUES WHERE HE IS UNABLE TO PROVIDE THE ATTENTION AND LOVE THAT THIS PET DESERVES. Where did you get your pet? MCACC - NEW Is your pet spayed/neutered? YES Do you have any vaccine history for your pet? NOTHING MORE THAN WHAT WAS PROVIDED BY MCACC Has your pet been around other animals? What kind of animals? How would you describe the interaction with other animals? NO Has your pet been around any other people or children? If yes, how would you describe the animals behavior towards other people/children? NO Has your pet shown any aggression around other people? If yes, what were the circumstances? NO Where was your pet kept, inside or outside? INSIDE, FREE ROAMING If inside, did you keep your pet in a crate? Was he/she destructive in any way? NO DESTRUCTIVE WAYS If outside, what kind of fencing do you have and did it contain the animal? BLOCK WALL Is your pet potty trained? YES Does your pet show any aggression, like \*\*growling, curling their lips, lunging\*\* around food, toys, or people? NO there anything we need to know medically about your pet? THE OWNER HAS TAKEN HER

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TO THE VET AND SHE HAS BEEN DIAGNOSED TO HAVING A MASS ON THE BACK BETWEEN HER TWO BACK LEGS, AN OLD INJURY THAT APPEARS TO BE A ACL INJURY - PER THE VET. THE OWNER ALSO MENTIONS THAT SHE DOES NOT LIKE HER DOG FOOD. SHE HAS ONLY EATEN TWICE SINCE HE HAS HAD HER AND THAT IS BECAUSE SHE HAS BEEN GIVEN HER HUMAN FOOD. Does your pet walk on a leash? YES Does your pet know any obedience/tricks? STAY, SIT, LAY DOWN

## Medical Treatments 9

**11/14/2023**

11/14/23 15:38 BAR, BCS 7/9 HR 100 bpm, RR pant MM/CRT pink/ moist/ <2sec DENTAL: grade (1+/4); mild gingival hyperplasia OPHTHO: NSF – OU clear, no blepharospasm or ocular discharge AURAL: AU moderate erythema and debris; no head shake or head tilt CARDIO: NSF – no murmurs or arrhythmias ausculted RESP: NSF – eupnic; no nasal discharge; normal bronchovesicular lung sounds ausculted in bilateral lung fields GI: NSF - soft, nonpainful abdomen DERM: ~1.5cm diameter, slightly pedunculated, superficially ulcerated dermal mass along proximomedial RH limb MUSC/ SKEL: grade 1/5 RH lameness, thickened R stifle w/ mild amount of crepitus palpated during flexion NEURO: NSF - normal mentation UROGENITAL: juvenile mammary and vulva, green tattoo L/N: N/E ddx. diet-related, underlying endocrinopathy, etc; mild AU otitis externa; RH limb dermal mass - ddx. malignant versus benign; mild RH lameness - ddx. osteoarthritis, previous/chronic CCL

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## Bite Information

No recorded bites 10