

CONVERSATION-BASED

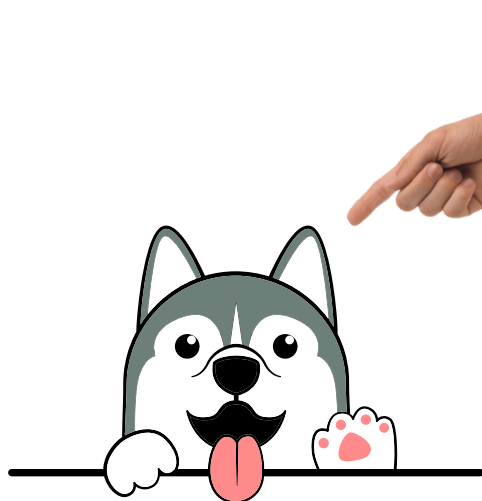
MATCHMAKING TIPS

Navigating adoption inquiries

Pass/fail adoption applications both screen out good matches AND turn many would-be adopters away from rescue entirely. Conversation-based adoption counseling (*when you know how to navigate it*) gives a significantly better idea of a dog's suitability for the interested party and increases odds of placement for your more difficult cases.

The Vague Opener:

Not enough info to determine a match



Examples:

- "I'm interested in this dog."
- "When can I meet him?"
- "How much?"

Respond with:

"Thank you so much for asking about Bessie!" What are you looking for in a dog?"



**This politely acknowledges their interest while also putting the onus on them to lay out whether or not they may be a match for this specific dog.*

CONVERSATION-BASED

MATCHMAKING TIPS

Direct Questions:



Examples

- “Is she good with kids?”
- “Does she like car rides?”
- “House-trained?”

Note: In multi-variable homes with unknowns (ex. kids and dogs while we have limited or poor information about our dog, I generally see this as high-ish risk for an incident and will steer them toward another animal unless they are already well-versed in behavior).

If she has a positive known history

Respond with:

“She has been behaviorally compatible with ____ in the past and might be a good fit for a home with them! Every situation is different so we can’t make any guarantees but we’d love for you to meet (or for her to meet ____) and see how everyone feels! What else are you looking for in a dog?”

If she has a negative known history

Respond with:

“She has been behaviorally **in**compatible with ____ in the past so we wouldn’t recommend her for a home with them. What else are you looking for in a dog? Perhaps I can make some alternate suggestions!”

CONVERSATION-BASED

MATCHMAKING TIPS

Direct Questions (cont'd):



Examples

- “Is she good with kids?”
- “Does she like car rides?”
- “House-trained?”

If she has a *mixed* notes

Respond with:

“She might be behaviorally compatible with ___ but we can’t say for sure. She has felt differently in different situations so if you were seriously considering her, I’d recommend meeting her a couple times and having a plan for initial separation and slow introductions over time. What else are you looking for in a dog? If you decide she’s not a fit, maybe I can make some alternate suggestions!”

If we *don’t know*

Respond with:

“She arrived as a stray (or with limited notes) so we don’t really know. I (or staff) would be happy to discuss what a safe, slow introduction in the home might look like if you’re still interested in meeting her? What else are you looking for in a dog?”

CONVERSATION-BASED

MATCHMAKING TIPS

Disclosing Difficult Information

Be honest, but tactful

Bites On-Record



"Are you okay with a dog who bites?"

Context and severity are always relevant and often entirely insignificant in a fitting home environment. A resource guarding bite vs. a redirect bite vs. a fear bite are worlds apart.

Discuss the behavior and then the bite in context. Do not lead with a bite announcement. If people understand the why of a behavior/bite first it will remove a lot of the shock value that often acts as a deterrent.

Alternate ways to say hard things

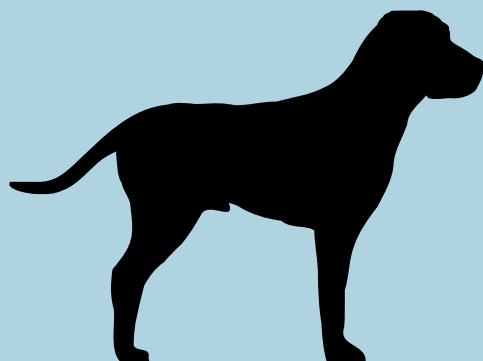
Less than promising behavior around other animals



"Has a history of making poor choices around other dogs/animals so we wouldn't really recommend him for a home with them."

- "Fatal altercation with another dog"
- "Had a serious fight with another dog and the other dog didn't make it"

Killed a dog



CONVERSATION-BASED

MATCHMAKING TIPS

Disclosing Difficult Information (cont'd)

Alternate ways to say hard things

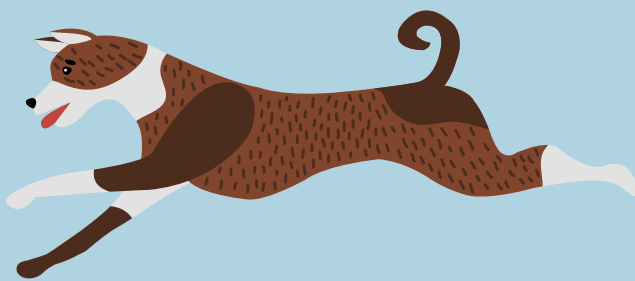
Killed a cat or pocket pet



"Fatal incident with a cat/pocket pet due to prey drive"

"Becomes a man on a mission when he decides he doesn't like a dog. Probably dislikes a lot of dogs. He probably shouldn't go home with dogs."

Unsteerable in playgroup



Potential to tip



"Insecure with other dogs. May want to play but get quickly overwhelmed by it and overreact, potentially causing a fight."

"Insecure with chaotic movements and individuals who don't know how to respect his boundaries. May panic and snap at someone who scares him. Children have a harder time understanding and respecting dog body language which makes them more likely to cross this line"

Flinchy or Fearful



CONVERSATION-BASED

MATCHMAKING TIPS

Disclosing Difficult Information (cont'd)

Alternate ways to say hard things

Potential to redirect

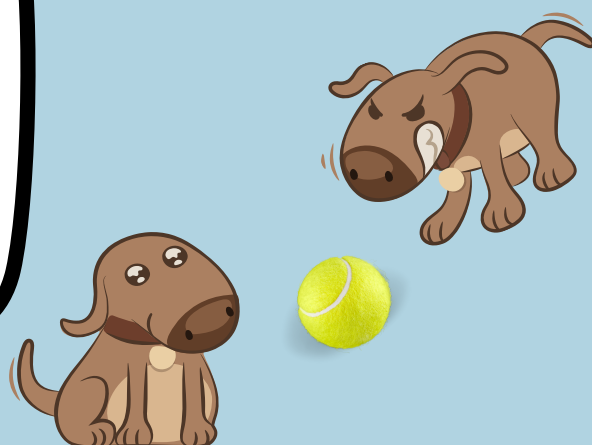
(To note: this is often something only observed here)



"If they are VERY stressed about something (like perhaps walking past a barking dog), they may use their mouth as an outlet for that frustration on whatever is nearest them. Leash-biting is a very common example. Snapping at hands trying to grab their collar in this state is also common."

"Does not want to share food/toys/etc with other animals. Might act out against other resident animals if put in a position where he feels the need to defend his things. Often easily managed by feeding separately and keeping toys put away. Often a non-issue with people"

Resource guarding against other animals



Resource guarding items or food against people



"Doesn't want to share items/food he REALLY likes and will defend them if he thinks they might be taken away. Management for this is simple but requires consistency which can be difficult depending on your home set up."

"Feels the need to be overprotective of his person or people. Often easiest to navigate in a 1-person household but can work if all home residents can consistently split caregiving duties 50/50."

Resource guarding people against people



CONVERSATION-BASED

MATCHMAKING TIPS

Disclosing Difficult Information (cont'd)

Alternate ways to say hard things

Stranger Danger



"Slow to warm up and needs to be allowed to set the pace of a relationship. Will not respond well to forcing interaction when they're not requesting it."

"Has opinions about who he does and does not want to interact with and isn't shy about expressing them."

People Selective



www.rachelattheshelter.com

Rachel at the Shelter offers process streamlining and materials development for animal welfare organizations.