Animal Photography Tips

Animal photos are the primary way potential adopters connect with their future pets online, so good photos make a huge difference! There are *3 main shots* we try to capture:

1) **The portrait:** the glamour shot! We want eyes staring into souls!
2) **The full-body shot**: something to give adopters a sense of the animal's size (this is especially important with dogs)
3) **The connection photo**: something that shows the animal engaged in something it loves. Ideally, this would be a human they're spending some time with, but looking cheeky with their favorite toy also works!
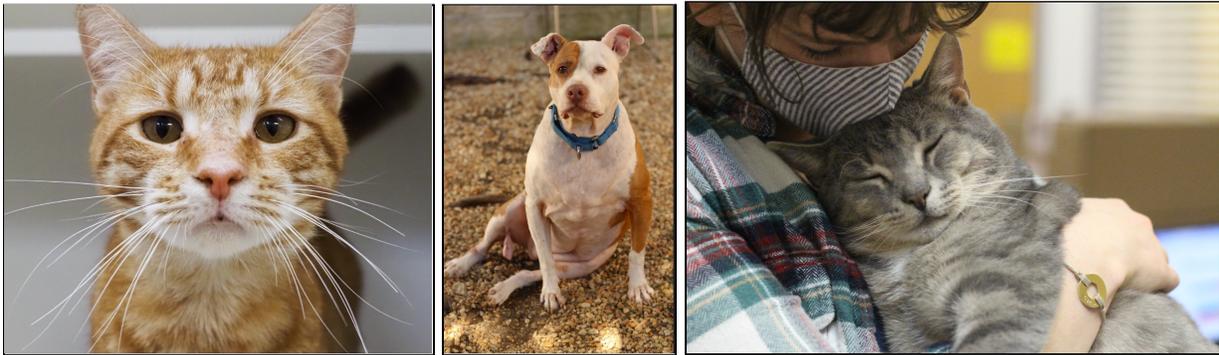
Tips & Tricks

- **Keep your lens clean:** You'd be surprised how smudged it can get through normal use! A clean lens is going to provide better light and sharper focus
- **Skip the zoom and crop!** The digital zoom on our phones tends to reduce the resolution of our photos, making them pixelated. Instead, you can move closer to the subject, or crop it after you get your photo!
- **Try to use natural light in lieu of your camera's flash:** Especially in animal shots, we can get that red reflection from their eyes.
- **Get used to your camera's timing:** Sometimes there's a lag!
- **Use your body as a tripod in low-light to avoid blur:** You might end up looking like a gargoyle, but it's worth it! Bracing your elbows against your body to steady your arms can really help!
- **Keep any editing subtle:** Boosting the exposure or reducing the shadows can help us better see the animals' faces, but changing the colors can obscure their real appearance.
- **De-clutter the background:** Avoid including the litter pan, feces, food, or a messy kennel in any photos. Move bowls or clutter out of the way before taking a photo.
- **Take a few deep breaths** and talk calmly in a low voice to help the animal relax.

> **iPhone-Specific Tips**
> - The volume button also acts as a shutter!
> - Get close and use the focus feature (tap the subject on your screen)
> - Try HDR!

Wrangling Your Model

- **Get eye-level with an animal rather than shooting from above.** Some of our animals get too excited to stay still if we crouch down, so having another person can come in handy here. Avoid photos of the top of their heads.
- **Get an animal interested in you and try to capture them with their ears forward and eyes engaged with you.** If an animal's ears are back, it conveys that they're stressed or uncomfortable, and if they seem distracted, it's not the best sell to potential adopters. Whistling, raspberries, and bells are all great tools for this!
- **Try to have the animal facing a light source:** be it the brighter part of the room, a window, or a lamp, turning their face toward the light makes sure their facial features are clearly visible!
- **Scaredy cat?** If a pet is intimidated by the camera, let them eat a treat that you hold right next to it: they should start coming around after a few rounds of this!
- **Avoid sensory overload:** if you're constantly squeaking or crinkling a toy, animals will start to ignore it. Instead, establish the focus, and then shoot and squeak or crinkly simultaneously to get their attention at the right moment!

Dogs

- Get their energy out! Let them explore and get comfortable before you start trying to convince them to sit still for the camera
- Most of our pups know at least a couple of commands – sit/stay is enormously useful, so see what they know!

Cats

- Feather wands or high-value treats (whatever that means to them!) are your best friend! Move the treat/feather from the cat's nose to the lens, autofocus, and click!
- Crinkly toys right next to the lens work wonders!

Bonus tip! Try out the "rule of thirds:" It's not actually a rule, but it can create more compelling photos. The goal is not to get the focal point in the center square but rather centered around one of the intersecting points on the grid and to fill the frame.