

Foster Guide: Online Promotion

PAWS is counting on your help to list your foster pet for adoption! [Please complete this form to provide a bio and photos](#). What you send in will be published on PAWS' website, as well as other sites like petfinder.com and adoptapet.com.

Most of our adopters use the internet to search for a pet, so **making a good web listing is one of the most important things you can do to find your foster a home**. You can see our current animal listings [here](#). Your foster might already have a bio, but it was likely written when the animal first came in, before we knew much about their personality, so **we're counting on you to write a new bio**. Your foster will also need new photos that reflect how happy and comfortable they are now that they're out of the shelter. **If your foster is already online from their time in the shelter, you must still send an updated bio and photos.**

Before you begin, please take a moment to review this [foster pet marketing guide from Maddie's Fund and HeartsSpeak](#).

Here are some additional pointers to get started...

Bio writing tips

As the person who knows your foster pet best, **you have a special perspective**. You know what the pet is like in a home, their quirks and habits, and everything that makes them unique. Adopters often say they want to "know what they're getting," so they will appreciate reading what you have to say and just might fall in love!

The bio doesn't have to be a work of art, just a **positive** and straightforward description of the pet in your own words. Just a paragraph or two is fine. You can build on what's already in your foster's online listing, or start a description from scratch.

To get started, here are some questions you can answer:

- How would you describe this pet to a friend?
- What are the most adorable things the pet does? ("the little things" that **help adopters fall in love**.)
- What kind of environment is this pet happiest in?
- Has the pet met other animals, and how did they react?
- What does the pet like to do around the house?
- What is the most funny or cute thing your foster does?
- What do you love most about your foster?

More writing tips: For a deeper look at how to write a great bio that will get your foster adopted, read PAWS' Bio Writing Guidelines at phillypaws.org/petbios.

An important note about medical needs: if your foster has a medical condition that will affect their life post-adoption, a brief description should be included in the bio (this only applies to conditions that will

persist after adoption; if your foster has recovered from a shelter illness like eye infection or ringworm, you don't need to include that. If you are unsure whether your foster has something that should be listed, please ask the foster staff and they can help you decide.

First, introduce your foster and say positive things about them (follow the tips in the section above). Then, explain their needs in plain language for people who may be unfamiliar with veterinary terminology, and describe how it may impact daily life. If you'd like help, here is some sample text you can start with:

[Name] has a medical condition called [name of condition], which means that [briefly describe the condition and how it affects the pet's life]. He/she will need [explain their needs; special food, monitoring by a vet, daily medications, etc.]. If you're interested in adopting, PAWS staff will be happy to discuss their needs with you in more detail.

Picture taking tips

Great, eye-catching photos are the most important part of a pet's listing! You must send in at least one close-up photo to serve as the main headshot, plus 2-4 other photos showcasing the pet's personality.

Please follow these guidelines:

- **Make sure there's plenty of light** so the pictures come out **bright and clear**. Let in natural lighting by opening the shades and blinds (just make sure your pet isn't back-lit or they'll show as a silhouette)!
- Please make sure photos are **clear and not blurry**.
- **Get down to the pet's level** to take a picture, instead of photographing from above.
- **Get up close and personal:** go near enough to the animal with the camera so the animal takes up most of the frame (it will result in a better picture than zooming in or cropping afterward).
- Photograph in a place where there is **no clutter in the background** - the less stuff in the picture, the better the animal will stand out.
- When photographing on your phone, **take lots of pictures in a row** by holding down the shutter button or tapping it rapidly. Later, you can choose the best ones and delete the rest.
- Try to get the animal to make **eye contact** with the camera, or to look just above the camera. Hold a toy or treat above the camera to encourage them to look up. Use something that makes sound, like crumpling a piece of paper or squeaking/jingling a toy.
- Take your time - animals may not "pose" for photos right away, but if you spend a few minutes waiting patiently with your camera ready, the right shot will eventually happen.
- If the animal isn't comfortable having a camera pointed at them, get them used to it by placing the camera/phone down next to them for a while, or holding it near them while you pet them or give treats.
- If you have a newer phone camera with a Portrait Mode option, use it! It will help your foster's face stand out.
- If you don't have a camera phone or don't feel you take good pictures, find a friend who does, or reach out to PAWS for help!

Here are a few kinds of photos you can take:

- Close-up face shots where the pet is making direct eye contact.

- A photo of the pet being petted or held.
- Interacting with a human - being petted or scratched, curled up on a lap, rubbing their cheek against someone.
- Doing things that reflect its personality: a mellow dog resting peacefully, a playful cat swatting a toy, etc.

If you'd like more photo-taking guidance, here's a helpful tutorial: <https://youtu.be/-SDI-A8RY5E>

Photos should be sent as individual images, not a collage. You're also encouraged to send **a brief video** of your foster pet being playful, adorable, and affectionate: this is optional but makes a big difference.

Unless you request otherwise, your email address will be included in the listing for adopters to contact directly. **By listing your email address, you agree to monitor your email daily** (including spam folder) and respond to adoption inquiries in a timely manner (within two days at most). Even if your foster has an adopter lined up, you should respond to inquiries to let them know. If you have questions or concerns about a potential adopter, you can always reach out to staff.

Stay in touch! If a few weeks have passed and your foster has not been adopted, take new pictures and add new details to refresh their online bio. You're always welcome to send in updated photos and info as your foster settles in.

Social media promotion

We encourage you to post your foster on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter: wherever you can get the word out best! Promoting among your own friends is important because not only will you help your foster get adopted, you'll also reach a new audience of potential adopters that PAWS isn't already reaching. The more new adopters we recruit, the more lives we save!

Getting started

Introduce your new foster by posting a photo and description, then continue posting once or twice a week so friends can follow along and learn more. Ask friends to share to their networks as well - let them know that even if they're not looking to adopt, they might know someone who is (tip: set your post's privacy settings to "public" to make it shareable if you're on Facebook). Posting to neighborhood group pages (either via Facebook or the Nextdoor app) is another great way to reach local people outside of your network. When posting on Facebook and Twitter be sure to always link to your foster's adoption bio!

Instagram

If finding an adopter in your extended social network hasn't worked so far, we strongly recommend taking advantage of Instagram. In the last year, we've had more successful adoptions through Instagram vs Facebook than ever before, and creating a foster account is an excellent way to get your foster pet in front of a whole new set of eyes. If you're new to Instagram, creating an account is easy, and if you already have an account, it only takes a moment to add a second one and switch between the two if you'd rather not use your personal account.

Your instagram profile

If you plan on continuing to foster in the future, we recommend creating an instagram handle specific to fostering, rather than making one unique to just one animal that you're fostering at the moment (just a few examples include [@philly_foster_nerds](#), [@dalystreetfosters](#), [@monkeybutterfly](#)).

For your profile, make sure to include that you are fostering for PAWS, and how you would like people to contact you if they are interested in adopting (either DM, an email address of your choice, or adoptions@philypaws.org). Keep in mind that Instagram doesn't allow clickable links in regular posts; instead, you can add a link to your profile that will show up at the top of your page (we recommend linking directly to our adoption application or to your foster's adoption bio if they have one).

Tagging

Hashtags and tagging are incredibly important on Instagram. Even if you only have two followers, you can get your foster in front of PAWS' 20k+ followers by tagging @philypaws in your posts, and using the #philypaws and #philypawsfoster hashtags. This also ensures that we see your photo, which gives us a chance to share it directly to the PAWS page (something we do often)! Please also make sure to **tag PAWS in your Instagram stories** — we check our story tags daily, and almost always share them to the main PAWS page!

Post early

Although we sometimes wait to post adoption profiles to the PAWS website until pets are old enough/healthy enough for adoption, you can absolutely post about them on social media to make people fall in love and line up an adopter ahead of time. This is especially useful for kittens, who are even more likely to hook potential adopters when they're at their tiniest ([@cats_plan](#) has some great examples of this on their profile)! Followers also love to see medical journeys when cats or dogs are recovering from injuries (just be careful not to post anything too graphic)!

Post Often

We recommend posting as often as you have a chance to do so! Once you've introduced your foster animal with a few detailed posts about their personality and needs, you'll have more flexibility to start sharing briefer "snapshots" without feeling like you need to tell their full story in every post. Whether they're napping in their favorite spot, making a funny face while they eat, or playing with their favorite toy, you'll be giving potential adopters an idea of what your foster is really like in a home, which will make it easier to imagine making them a part of the family! Higher quality pictures are always more likely to grab attention, but that shouldn't stop you from sharing cute moments as they happen! Check out the #philypawsfoster hashtag on Instagram for more ideas and inspiration!

Finally, **speak up!** If you've done everything here and your foster still isn't getting adopted, please ask for help. PAWS foster staff can help brainstorm ways to find your foster a home, such as bringing them to adoption events, adding to the Urgents list on PAWS' website, connecting you with photography volunteers, posting to PAWS' social media channels, and more.

Thank you for fostering and saving a life!