



Tips and Tricks for Shooting Video of Adoptable Animals



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If a good picture is worth a thousand words, a good video is worth that much more. These days, more and more animal groups are shooting video of their adorable adoptables to increase their chances of catching the attention of prospective adopters.

There are many different ways to film a video that features a pet available for adoption. Ultimately, the best video is the one that helps get an animal into a forever home. The Best Friends videographers offer these tried-and-true tips and tricks to help you create compelling videos and get animals adopted.

SHOW AND TELL

Video is used to its best advantage when you have something to show as well as tell. So, film your adoptable dog or cat doing something, preferably an activity that helps “sell” the pet to viewers and show off his/her personality and endearing quirks. You can shoot multiple clips of the adoptable animal doing different things or you can shoot just one great one. Here are some ideas:

- If a dog is trained to respond to cues like “sit” and “come” or a cat loves to play with a ball or string, try to capture those actions on video.
- If you can, get at least one clip of the adoptable animal sharing affection or connecting with a person. Showing the pet interacting with a person helps potential adopters see the possibility that they might be able to share the same kinds of moments with the animal.
- If the animal is in foster care or can go on a sleepover, that’s great, because you can shoot the video in a home-like environment, demonstrating that the pet is comfortable in a home and ready for adoption. Shoot scenes like the pet cuddling on the couch with his/her foster person or playing in the backyard with a ball — anything that will help a potential adopter envision that animal in his/her home.
- People love funny animal videos. If the dog or cat does something special or funny, try to capture that.



It's important to get at least one clip of the adoptable animal sharing affection or interacting positively with a person.

HIGHLIGHT THE BEST QUALITIES

You want someone to notice this animal, so before you start shooting, think about how you can make this particular pet stand out from the crowd. The video should demonstrate the best qualities of the animal you are shooting. Here are some examples:

- If a pet is great with kids, bring a young person along on your video shoot to play with the animal.
- If a dog is great with other dogs (or a cat is fabulous with other cats), film the dog playing with another dog or the cat hanging out with other cats.
- If a dog is trained to respond to cues or knows some tricks, demonstrate some of that expertise on camera.
- If a dog has an adorable head tilt — or a cat fetches and retrieves — capture that.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

To keep viewers focused on the animal, minimize visual and auditory distractions in your videos. For example:

- When filming dogs, it's best if we don't see a lot of chain-link fencing in the shot. Try to make the background appealing: avoid shooting in an unkempt yard or against a building with peeling paint. Also, pick a spot that is well-lit, not too dark.
- Aim for shooting the video in a spot that is not too noisy — away from busy road sounds, lots of barking or talking. Background noise can be distracting to viewers and make your edit more difficult.

CONNECT WITH THE ANIMAL

As mentioned above, it's important to get at least one clip of the adoptable animal sharing affection or interacting positively with a person. Also, try to get some footage at the eye level of the animal you are filming, as opposed to shooting exclusively from above. Eye-level footage helps people connect with the animal and generally is more compelling.

SHOOT FOR VARIETY

Get a variety of shots of the animal if you can: close shots of the animal's face, wide shots of the animal running, playing or just standing. Hold each shot you get for 10-30 seconds. Avoid zooming in and out while you're shooting because this is distracting to viewers. Instead, try to follow any action by moving the camera. On tighter shots especially, try to hold the camera still. As previously noted, if the animal does one special visual thing, attempt to capture it. One adorable moment can help "sell" the animal to potential adopters.

THE AUDIO PORTION

During the video, you'll want someone to be talking about the pet, describing what he or she is like. There are two ways to do this:

- Recruit a co-worker or volunteer to film you and the animal together while you tell viewers a little bit about the animal's best qualities.
- If you are filming alone, talk about the animal from behind the camera while you are filming. Try to keep your description of the pet to about 30 seconds, a minute tops. If you make a mistake



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or forget something, pause and start over (which will make editing easier). You'll want to take some additional footage of the dog or cat without you speaking.

While you are shooting, avoid talking about things other than the animal and be careful not to say anything that you might not want in the video. Take some pauses so that you can capture any natural sounds of the animal playing. Keep the tone of your voice friendly, casual and relaxed.

What should you say when describing the pet? Give some basic information and focus on the positive traits of the animal. Here's an example:

This is Honey Bear, a beautiful five-year-old girl and a very playful dog. She loves people and walks. She's sweet and loving — a go-anywhere, do-anything kind of dog — but she's a little selfish. She does not want to share her home with a cat.

You'll want to mention any medical or behavior challenges that the animal has, but delivery is everything. For example, instead of saying "She is dog aggressive," you could say "She prefers to be an only dog and doesn't always play well with others." Or, in the case of a physical limitation, you could say "He lost one of his eyes years ago, but he doesn't seem to mind at all," rather than "He's blind in one eye."

Another thing to keep in mind: Unless a particular restriction is warranted (e.g., a dog isn't good with children so he must go to an adults-only home), don't limit the prospective adopters by proposing a

particular type of home ("She would be perfect for a retired couple").

A FEW RULES OF THUMB

- Keep the length of the video between one and two minutes.
- Start the footage by holding a piece of paper with the animal's name written on it in front of the lens. This is a low-tech way to tell your video editor which animal is in the video.
- Shoot all the footage of one animal at a time; don't mix up 10 shots of Honey Bear with 10 other dogs or cats.
- Brand each video with your organization's name and website address.
- Don't use fancy effects, transitions or background music that can distract viewers from focusing on the pet. You want to keep the video focused on the animal.
- Do try to keep the video upbeat and fun. You are essentially marketing the animal via video to try and find a forever home. Make that pet shine.

SAMPLE VIDEOS

To see lots of examples of adoption videos, click on Adorable Adoptables on the Best Friends video site: <http://www.youtube.com/user/BestFriendsVideos>