

Going Grey.

Why adopt a retired racing dog? by Cate Bronson

Grey Opportunities.

Greyhounds are loving, low-maintenance, low-allergy, low-key dogs with hearts equal to their size. You'll also save a life from an industry that euthanizes tens of thousands of dogs each year only because they fail to perform on the track.

Greyhounds have a lot to offer as pets, and come in a multitude of colors, shapes, sizes and personalities. Their variety stems from the fact that racing dogs are bred for a purpose and not conformity. As a result, this pedigreed breed provides an assortment to choose from, and unlike many purebred pooches, suffer fewer health issues except those resulting from a hazardous occupation. So, if rescuing a retired race dog sounds like a wise choice to you, then you rank among a growing number of dog lovers who feel the same way. But with so much selection, how do you choose which grey is best for you?

A little research (there are numerous books available about greyhounds) and a greyhound adoption agency can be helpful; especially, considering the rehabilitation process for these dogs tends to be more complex than with other rescues. The transition from kennel to house is a major adjustment for retired racers. Greyhounds hot off the track have no experience as pets. Since birth, they've been taught that only one thing matters—winning the race. Unlike most dogs familiar with a home since puppyhood, greys only know a life as livestock, one that too often involves injury, neglect and abuse. They live in a wire cage, crammed in a kennel with other whimpering dogs, permitted only a fraction of each day to stretch their long legs. The shift to domestic living can be a shock. Greyhounds have no concept of stairs, windows, swimming pools, furniture, or being part of a family. Essentially, race dogs are handicapped by their former life and start out as special needs animals. A few remain needy indefinitely, but with enough care, fostering and training, they mature into amazing pets. What these dogs require most is time, tolerance, and loads of love. Most rescue agencies understand this, and are

best informed to match a specific dog to a prospective adopter. They also understand matching a grey well to its new family is crucial for long-term success.

If you decide to adopt a greyhound, the best thing you can do is let the adoption agency assist you. Utilize their knowledge. Let them do the leg work. It may take a few weeks longer than anticipated, but will be worth the wait to welcome a loving animal into your home forever. Greys are a long-lived breed for large dogs (your five-year-old rescue could be with you ten years), so patience at the starting gate can transform an athlete into a love bug, couch potato that will live with you a long time and suit you in more ways than you can imagine.

Most adoptions begin with the best of intentions, but sometimes for the worst reasons—a gift for the kids, a cure for loneliness, a buffer against an abuser, a test-run for parenthood, or just too cute to resist. Whatever the reason, a rushed adoption can lead to disappointment, heartbreak, and even disaster. So, don't let an impulsive choice or emotional reaction based on limited information guide you. Like children, dogs are a big responsibility and a lifetime commitment (for their lifetime) that demand and deserve the best you can offer.

If you are adopting a grey for the first time, it's important to do your pre-adoption homework and let the rescue agency help determine the right fit. You may or may not be thrilled with the outcome. You may even discover this isn't a good time in your life to adopt. But you will learn more about greyhounds and about yourself. Whatever you do, don't expect to walk away with a rescue dog minutes after seeing it or reading about it online. And don't be offended by a time-consuming and comprehensive adoption process. It exists for an important reason. I'd question any agency that fails to vet adopters thoroughly. Rescues want to place dogs quickly too, but they also want the relationship to work. If they seem picky it is a good sign, and will benefit you as much as the dog.



Kate is an affectionate, active four-year old female. She walks well on a short leash and enjoys taking drives. She is fine crated when home alone, but may not be cat safe. She gives little licks to show her love and zest for life.



Roadie is a handsome, loving four-year-old boy. He adapted splendidly to home life in foster care and would be fine with other dogs or on his own as an only pet. Roadie is a quick study and walks well on a leash. He also loves toys and enjoys shredding them. He is an attractive pup with a tuxedo look and good manners appropriate for any situation.



**Racing Dog Rescue
Project (RDRP)**
Rdrp-Greyhound.org

Fast Friends at Sarasota Track
SarasotaKennelClub.com/contact/
sponsorships.php

Great-Greyhound.org

In addition to the regular considerations regarding dog adoption, the following questions should be asked when adopting a greyhound:

Are you certain that your landlord or family members will allow you to own a large dog?

Are you planning a family or have small children? Some greyhounds are fine with infants but due to their size and needs may not be recommended for families with children under the age of 6.

Do you have a securely fenced yard or are you prepared to walk your dog at least three times every day?

Are you making an emotional decision, or have you researched the breed and know your needs as well as that of the animal?

Greyhounds are available at different ages, so you also have the benefit of choosing a mellow senior to share your life for the next five years; or, a fun-loving, three-year-old to enjoy for ten or more.

The grey you take home tomorrow may not be the dog you had in mind today, but will become the best friend you've ever known. Spend extra time at home with your dog in the first few weeks and get acquainted. You will realize this is one of the greatest things to happen in your life.

If you have researched your options, but remain uncertain about adoption, other avenues exist to help you decide. Many rescues offer a foster-to-adopt program. This is a great way to become acquainted with the breed and individual dogs. Even if the first dog you foster is not for you, you have done a good deed, and you're one step closer to finding the grey that will race away with your heart.

If you like large dogs, consider saving a life and adopting a greyhound. Keep in mind this is a life choice you will live with for a long time. Take it slow, do your homework, and find the best greyhound for you. Don't be afraid to relinquish control to an adoption agency in the process. Make sure they understand your prior pet history, lifestyle, and preferences. Then be patient. You will be rewarded. You may even find that stopping at one is not enough. As I have discovered, once you go grey, you'll never look back. 🐾

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