HOW TO READ A RETURN NOTE

A returned dog comes with a report card from a real home.

WHAT THE NOTE TELLS YOU

1. **House manners**
2. **Time alone**
3. **Triggers**
4. **The good stuff**

RETURN NOTE DECODER

The note says	What it often means	Could fit
Not good with our other dog	Didn't click with 1 dog	An only-dog home
Chased the cat	Prey drive or excitement	A cat-free home
Too much energy	Under-walked or bored	An active adopter
Cries when left	Boredom or separation panic	Someone home while training
Landlord said no	A lease problem, not a dog problem	Most homes that allow her
Bit someone	Needs details first	Only after a talk with behavior staff

WHAT THE NOTE MISSES

How long she lived there | What the home looked like | What the family didn't notice | What happened before that home

10 QUESTIONS FOR YOUR ADOPTION COUNSELOR

- ☐ 1. Who wrote this note?
- ☐ 2. How long did she live in the home?
- ☐ 3. What did the home look like?
- ☐ 4. Did the family call for help first?
- ☐ 5. Which line worries staff most?
- ☐ 6. Has she done this at the shelter?
- ☐ 7. How has she acted since coming back?
- ☐ 8. Is this her first return?
- ☐ 9. Can I see her full file?
- ☐ 10. Would the family take a message?

WHEN TO WALK AWAY

A bite that broke skin | Fights with the same kind of pet you have | A trigger you can't control

BY THE NUMBERS

35%

of returns tied to behavior that didn't fit the home

66%

of returned dogs came back within 30 days

69.3%

of surrendering owners said their dog had no behavior problems

Sources: Lauren Powell, University of Pennsylvania, for The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement, 2023; Thanawala, Virginia Tech, 2024; Powell et al., Frontiers in Veterinary Science, 2021.

letthembedog.com/blog/adopting-a-returned-dog

Read it like a review, not a verdict.

This article shares what we have learned from our own experience. It is not medical advice, and we are not veterinarians. If you have any concerns about your dog's health, please check with your vet.