

Do you really have to give up your German Shepherd?

So you think you are unable to keep your German Shepherd anymore!

There are several options available to you if you are unable to keep your German Shepherd, however before you go any further we encourage you firstly to read the article below which presents an honest assessment of the rehoming process.

Cast your mind back a little. Not that long ago, you were thrilled to have a German Shepherd puppy of your very own. You never dreamed you'd have to give him up someday. Even if you can't keep him anymore, your dog still depends on you to do what's best for him, just like he depended on you when he was a puppy. Now, more than ever, he needs you to make the right choices for his future.

Throughout this article, we're going to be direct and honest with you. Your dog is your responsibility. He has no one else but you to look out for his interests. It'll take effort, patience and persistence to find him the right home. He deserves your best efforts.

Before you start, there are some important things you should consider.

There's a big difference between being forced to give up your dog and wanting to "get rid of him". Search your heart for the real reason why your dog can't live with you anymore. Be honest with yourself. Your answer will probably fall into one of two categories.

People Problems, or Dog Problems

1. The most common people problems

"We're moving and we can't find a landlord who'll let us keep our dog." Many landlords don't allow children either - but you'd never give up one of your kids if you couldn't find the right apartment. Affordable rental homes that allow pets are out there if you work to find them. Most people give up too easily.

It doesn't have to be this way - Here are some useful tips.

Most people give up too quickly in their search for rental property that accepts pets. Don't be too quick to jump on the first house you see. There'll probably be a better one available soon. Widen your search. Most people only look as far as the classified ads. Many landlords list their property through real estate agents or rental associations rather than the classifieds. Take advantage of rental services that help tenants find houses. Ask friends, relatives and co-workers to keep an eye open for you. Many houses are rented via word of mouth before they're ever advertised in the papers.

A home that allows pets might be in a different neighbourhood than you'd prefer. It might be a few more kilometres from work. It might not be as luxurious as you'd like. It might cost a few dollars more. Are you willing to compromise if it means being able to keep your dog? "No Pets" doesn't always mean "no pets, period." Many landlords automatically rule out pets because they don't want the hassle. Many of these landlords are pet owners themselves. Just because the ad says "no pets" doesn't mean you shouldn't go see the houses anyway. During the interview, ask the landlord "Are pets absolutely out of the question?" If he answers, "well....", you have a chance! Hint: You'll have better luck asking this question in person than over the telephone - it's harder for people to say "no" to your face. To encourage a landlord to let you keep your dog:

- Bring your well-groomed, well-behaved dog to the rental interview.
- Show the landlord that your dog is well-cared-for and that you're a responsible owner.
- Bring along an obedience training certificate if your dog has one.
- Offer an additional security deposit or rental amount to be able to have a dog.

Bring references from your previous landlords and neighbours. Invite the landlord to see your present home to show him that the dog has not damaged the property nor been a nuisance to the neighbours. In difficult times, people often have to move in with relatives or friends who don't like dogs. This doesn't have to be an impossible situation. Use a dog crate when you're not home or when your family doesn't want your dog underfoot. A portable kennel run can be set up in the yard for exercise and can be sold later when you have your own place and don't need it anymore. Don't think you're being unfair to your dog by moving into a smaller place than what he's used to. Dogs are very adaptable, they can often adjust even faster than people. Where he lives isn't as important to him as who he lives with. He wants to be with you and he doesn't care where that is.

"We don't have enough time for the dog"

As a puppy, your dog took far more of your time than he does now. An adult German Shepherd doesn't really take that much time – all he wants is companionship from you, and taken out for a daily walk (something that is good for you also), and regular grooming which need only take an hour a week. HONESTLY, are you really that busy? Can other members of your family help care for the dog? Will getting rid of your German Shepherd really make that much difference to the time in your life? When they look closely at their lives, people often discover that the dog isn't cramping their style as much as they think.

2. The most common dog problems

Behaviour problems

If you got your dog as a puppy and he now has a behaviour problem you can't live with and you haven't really addressed it in earnest, you must accept the fact that you are at least partly responsible for the way your dog is now. You have four options:

1. You can continue to live with your dog the way he is.
2. You can get help to correct the problem.
3. You can try to give your problem to someone else.
4. You can have the dog destroyed.

Obviously the first option is out or you wouldn't be reading this article. You're probably most interested in Option 3, so let's talk frankly about that for a moment... If you were looking for a dog and could select one from all kinds of dogs and puppies, would you deliberately choose one with a behaviour problem? No, certainly not, and neither would anyone else. To make your dog desirable to other people, you're going to have to take some action to fix his problems. Most behaviour problems aren't that hard to solve. We can help you with them if you'll give it a try. What's more, if you solve his behavioural problems, you may find there is no longer a need to get rid of him.

Think hard about Option 2 before deciding it won't work for you, because the only option you have left is number 4, having the dog destroyed. That's the bottom line. If you, who know and love the dog best, won't give him another chance, why should anyone else? Think about that.

If you would like to seek help with your dog's behavioural problem(s), please check out our [Contacts](#) page for details of your closest GSDCV Training Branch.

If your dog has ever bitten anyone

If your dog is aggressive with people or has ever bitten anyone, you can't, in good conscience, give him to anyone else. Could you live with yourself if that dog hurt another person, especially a child?

It is also possible that a lawsuit could result from the withholding of any such information? You could stand to lose your home and everything else you own.

Our society today has zero tolerance for a dog with a bite history, no matter how minor. A dog that has bitten -- whether or not it was his fault -- can be considered by law to be a dangerous dog, and to be perfectly honest, no responsible person in his right mind would want to adopt a biting dog. No matter how much you love your dog, if he has ever bitten anyone, you only have one responsible choice -- take him to your veterinarian and have him humanely put to sleep. Don't leave him at a shelter where he might be frightened and confused and put other people at risk. Don't pass your problem off to another family who will be forced to make the same decision you should have reached. As hard as it is to face, putting a potentially dangerous, biting dog to sleep is the only safe and responsible thing to do. It's the right thing to do.

So how do you re-home your dog?

There are a few options available to you at this point, but first you need to be honest in assessing his potential for adoption.

1. Evaluate your dog's adoption potential

To successfully find a new home, you need to be realistic about your dog's adoption potential. Let's be honest - most people don't want "used" dogs, especially if they have health or behaviour problems. Your dog will have the best chance if he's less than four years old, is healthy, friendly to strangers, obeys commands and adapts quickly to new situations [if only they were all like that!]. Look at your dog as if you were meeting him for the first time. What kind of impression would he make?

2. Would you want to adopt him?

You already know that German Shepherds are special dogs for special people. Those special people can be hard to find. A lot of people interested in German Shepherds today have never had one before. They want a dog that will greet them with a wagging tail or will at least allow them to pet him. If your dog is aggressive to strangers or is "temperamental" – we have already talked about the correct option.

3. What kind of home do you want for your German Shepherd?

A large fenced yard? Another dog to play with? Children? No children? Make a list of what you feel is most important for your dog. Then get real. No home will be perfect, of course, so you'll have to make compromises. What kind of people are you looking for? What will you be willing to compromise on? Once you have a firm idea of what you're looking for, it will be easier to plan your search and get the results you want.

Next.....

Step 1. If you bought your dog from a breeder call the breeder and ask for help. Even if several years have passed, responsible breeders care about the puppies they sold and will want to help you find a new home, if they can. On occasions some may even be able to take the dog back. At the very least, they deserve to know what you intend to do with your dog and what will happen to it.

Step 2. The GSDCV has a listing service to assist you in rehoming your dog.

Complete the Application for Approved listing with the GSDCV Inc Rehoming Service and contact the rehoming officer.

We do NOT take the dog from you, and house it for you. You retain the dog with you, and as any calls are received we put you in touch with callers.

It is then between you and the prospective owner to determine whether the adoption is good for all concerned. THERE IS NO WAY OF TELLING HOW LONG THIS MAY TAKE, YOU NEED TO DO THIS IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL OTHER OPTIONS.

Step 3. The in-person interview

Once you've chosen a family (or families) you feel are good candidates, make an appointment for them to see the dog. You should actually set two appointments: one at your house and one at theirs. Going to their house lets you see whether their home and yard are truly what they said they are and whether your dog will do well there. It also gives you an opportunity to call off the adoption and take the dog back home with you if things aren't as represented, if you think there'll be problems, or if you just get a bad feeling about the whole thing. If they already have a dog, make plans to introduce the dogs on "neutral" territory, like a park. Most dogs resent meeting a strange dog at home. They may be hostile toward the new dog or even start a fight. If the family has children, ask them to bring them to the interview. You need to see how the dog will react to them and how the children treat the dog. Some allowance should be made for kids' natural enthusiasm but if these children are undisciplined, disrespectful to your dog and not kept in hand by their parents, your dog could be mistreated in its new home and someone could get bitten. Do you like these people? Are you comfortable having them as guests in your home? Would they make good friends? If not, don't give them your dog. Trust your instincts. If something about them doesn't seem quite right, even if you can't explain what it is, don't take a chance on your dog's future. Wait for another family!

Step 4. Saying goodbye

After the interviews are over, give the new family a day or two to decide if they really want to adopt your dog. Make sure they have a chance to think over the commitment they're making. While they're deciding, get a package ready to send along with your dog. This package should include: your dog's medical records and the name, address and phone number of your vet. Your name, address and phone (and new address if you're moving) your dog's toys and belongings (dog bed, blanket, etc.), a supply of dog food and special treats he loves, an instruction sheet on feeding, special needs, etc.; some reading material about the German Shepherd breed; collar and leash; ID and vaccination certificates. Set aside a special time for you and your dog to take a last walk together and say goodbye. We know you'll cry. Do it now, in private, so you're clear-headed when he has to leave. He may be confused about being left with strangers and you won't want your emotions to upset him even more. There are some things you need to explain to the new family before they take your dog home: the dog will go through an adjustment period as he gets to know his new people, learns new rules and mourns the loss of his old family. Most dogs adjust within a few days, but others may take longer. During this time, they should avoid forcing the dog to do anything stressful -- taking a bath, obedience training classes, meeting too many strangers at once, etc. -- until he's had a chance to settle in. Tell them to take things easy at first and give the dog time to bond to them. The dog might not eat for the first day or two. Not to worry -- he'll eat when he's ready. Some dogs temporarily forget their training. A well-housebroken dog may have an accident during the first day in his new home. This isn't unusual and rarely happens more than once.

Still need our help?

If you need further help or advice with managing your dog go to our [Contacts](#) page and contact your closest GSDCV Training Branch.

If your dog is unsuitable for rehoming and you must make a difficult decision, we can provide telephone support - contact Fran 5968 8235 or Judy 03 9796 9842.

We wish to acknowledge that this article has been adapted from an article written by Vicki DeGruy of the Chow Chow Club Inc., USA Welfare Committee.