

Adopt a Shelter Pet



A Play Production



Introduction

Adopt a Shelter Pet is a play designed to be performed by elementary school classes, particularly by students in the 1st - 5th grades. The older students will of course have a more polished performance, but don't be afraid to have younger students perform this show. They'll have a great time and parents love to see their children perform!

If you're new to putting on a class show, don't worry. Putting on a play is a wonderful experience for your students and it's not as tough as you think. This guide is designed to provide you with all of the necessary tips for a smooth, exciting and fun experience.

Getting Started

Figure on 4-6 weeks from the first introduction to final performance. This may sound like a lot of time, but remember, for the first few weeks you're only working for an hour or so a day. As the scheduled date gets closer, you'll want to spend more time rehearsing for a polished and professional performance. Be sure to schedule time for casting and set creation, including props and costumes.

The good news is that this show has been written so you can get out of it what you want. If you would like to work very hard creating props, sets, and costumes, enlist the help of parents and have a blast! Just be sure that the level of activity and stress is something you're comfortable with. You can also choose to go about it a bit easier and have little or no props and costumes. It depends upon your own personality and the students themselves. No matter how you choose to approach it, remember it's the process which is important for the students' education. They'll be reading, listening, speaking and developing self-esteem.



Casting

Adopt a Shelter Pet was written to be performed by a group of about 6 kids, but the show is very flexible. You can always add children as animals in the shelter. Included in the costumes section are ideas for creating dog and cat masks. It is suggested that you wait until the last week or two before you pick specific children for each part. Let various children experiment with different roles and try out different combinations. As you know, some children are a little shy about performing. On the other hand some students are naturals on stage and love the spotlight. Choose your large parts carefully. The last thing you want is to embarrass a child by putting them in a role they're not prepared for. Eventually, of course, you'll need to make a choice and probably a student or two will feel hurt by the selection. Try to help them understand that the selection in no way reflects poorly on them.

Costumes

You don't really need any costumes, but most kids (and most audiences) like them. The idea is to keep things simple and comfortable! Ideas for different parts include:

Child 1, 2, and 3: It doesn't get any easier than this....come as you!

Mom and Dad: This can be a fun one. Kids will often have great ideas like suit jackets, hats, aprons, glasses draw-on mustache, dress and heels, etc...Let the kids who play this part come up with the costume.

Animal Shelter Assistant: You're going for an animal control officer look. What works best is a tan button down shirt and tan pants. A fishing vest and a clipboard add to the overall look.

Dogs and Cats: Copy the heads of the animals on the pages following onto tag board. You can either color them or cover them with fur. If you use fur, be sure and add the details in another type of fabric like felt. Google eyes and pom pom noses make good additions as well. Make the head come to life by creating



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whiskers from fishing wire (get the thickest possible). Simply thread a needle with fishing wire, insert it in the back of the mask where whiskers would be and pull through to the front of the mask. Tie several knots in the fishing wire on the back of the mask and trim the fishing wire on the front about the length of a real whisker. Once you have made several whiskers, cover all the knots with a large piece of mailing tape to secure them and keep them in place.

The Set

You don't really need a set to put on a successful performance. However, if you choose to, the following ideas will help you. As long as you have a wall behind you, a set will be relatively easy to create. Be sure to enlist the help of parents and students. Divide the space you have on your wall in half. Decorate one half of the wall with butcher paper to look like neighborhood setting. Perhaps there will be a tree, a house in the background, etc. The other half will be the animal shelter.

Staging

If you have access to a real stage, then you can simply have the actors who are not performing wait off stage until it is time for them to enter. If you are performing in a classroom, however, with a large group and in a constricted space, you will probably have to keep all the actors on the "stage" at all times. You can have the students sit down until it is their turn to perform.

Rehearsals and Assessment

After the students have learned their parts, and the show has been cast, you can teach them where to stand and how and when to move. You will also need to work on behavior especially when they're not on stage. Remember, this is all part of the learning process, so take advantage the new opportunities for teaching and assessment. Some tips for stress free rehearsals are as follows:

- Don't panic. Rehearsals even up to the day of the performance, can sometimes be difficult. Please know that the kids will pull through when it counts.



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- Each day have the students critique their rehearsal. What did they do well that day? What do they still need to work on?
- Have more than one full dress rehearsals so students get used to the costumes. Invite a couple of classes to your dress rehearsals so students know what it feels like to perform in front of an audience.
- Consider videotaping a rehearsal and have the students analyze it. Was it good? What could have done better? This is a very valuable tool. When they see themselves fidgeting and/or fooling around, they will discover what they need to work on.

Performance Tips

One of the challenges in putting on plays is getting the students to use conversational dialogue with their lines, like they talk in real life. The key is to have the students emphasize the right words and tone; model speaking with expression and ease.

Final Performance

Your most important performance will probably be for the students' parents and families. If you're new to this, you'll probably be a little nervous. Remember that the parents are there to watch their child perform, not you. Rehearse the play well and all will be fine. If something does happen to go wrong...ignore it! Tell your students they should continue with the play as though nothing was amiss. Often the only ones aware of the mistake are the actors.

Last bit of advice...

Consider printing up a program and or invitation to the play. A cast party is traditional after the last performance of a play. The kids will really enjoy it and it will provide a great chance for the parents to talk with one another.



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Assessment

If you'd like to assess your students on their performance, there is a rubric on the following page that can assist you in this process.



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Oral Presentation Assessment



Date: _____

Title of Play: _____

- Rehearsal
 Performance

Student Name: _____

Character Part: _____

1 = Excellent 2 = Good 3 = Fair 4 = Poor

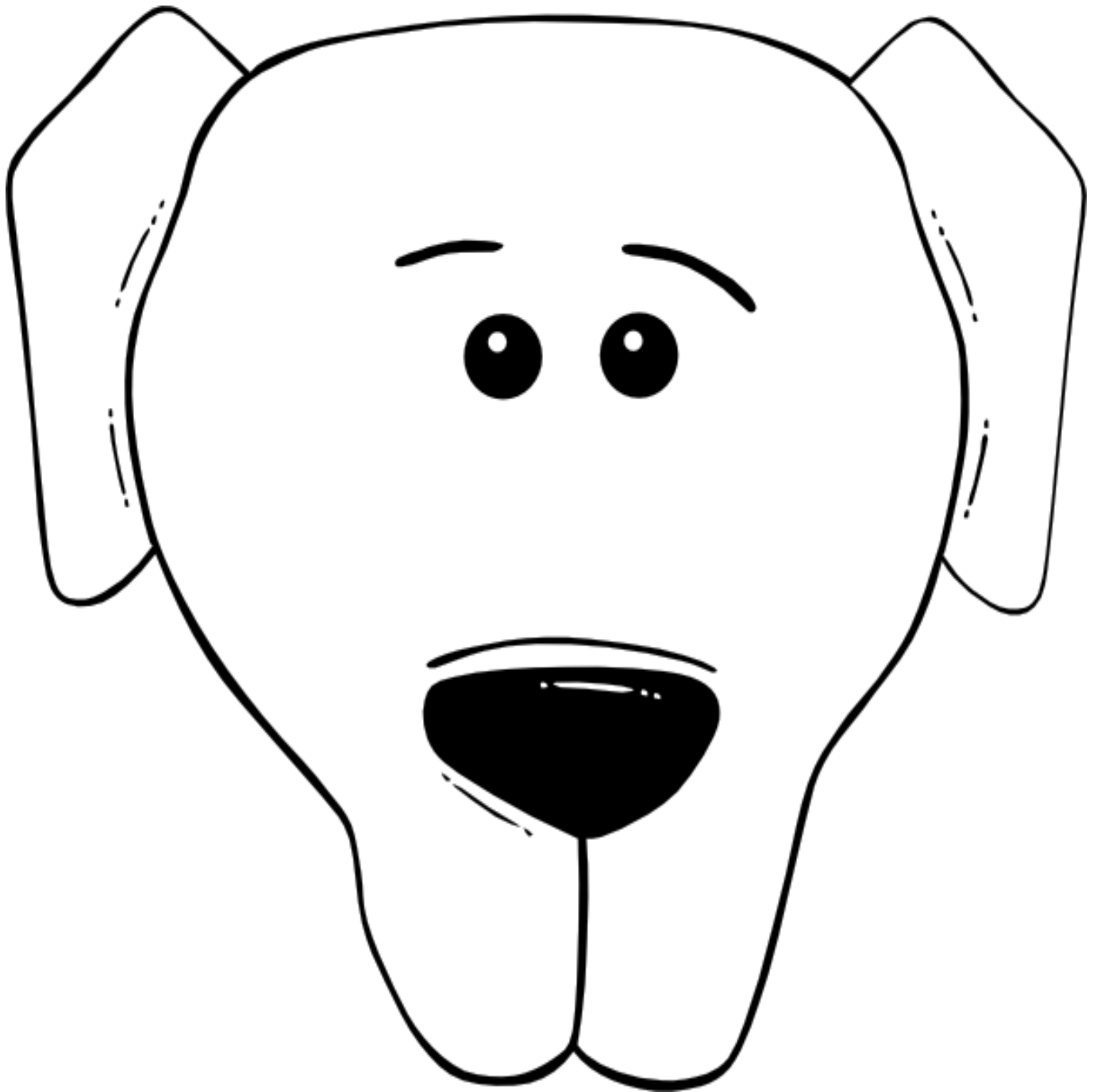
- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Student speaks clearly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Student speaks at appropriate pace. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Student speaks fluently, using appropriate intonation, expression, and emphasis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Student enlivens reading with gestures and facial expressions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Student prepared and used appropriate props. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Student participated in this production appropriately. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Comments: _____

Overall Grade for Performance: _____

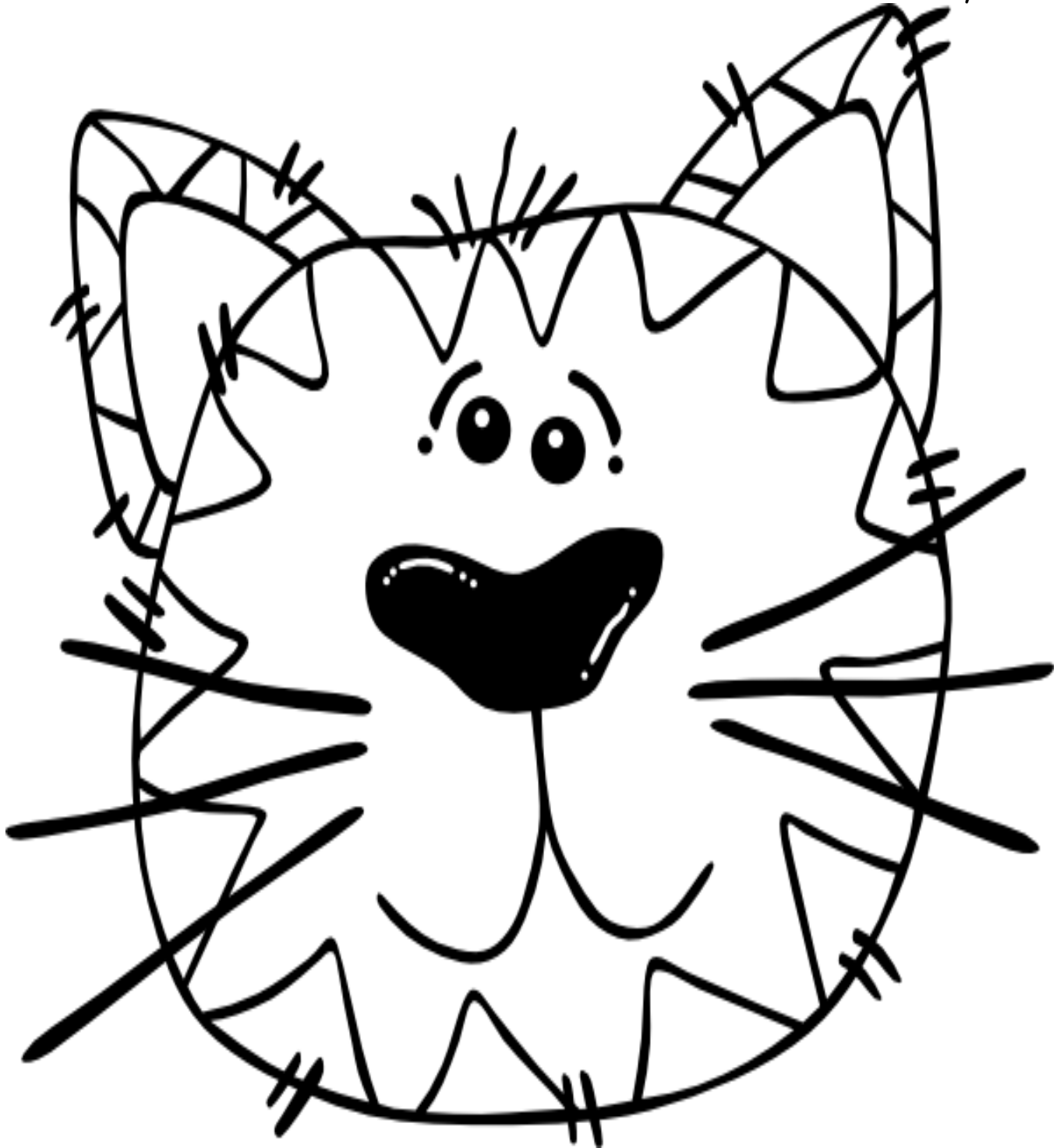


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Adopt a Shelter Pet

Cast:

Child 1

Child 2

Child 3

Mom

Dad

Animal Shelter Assistant (ASA)

Child 1: _____ and _____, guess what? My mom and dad said I can get a pet! I'm so happy! Tomorrow we're going to the pet store to pick one out! Do you want to come?

Child 2: _____, I'm so happy that you can get a pet! I know you've wanted one for a long time. Instead of going to the pet store, have you considered looking for a pet at the animal shelter? You could help your community by adopting from an animal shelter!



Child 1: I've heard of an animal shelter, but I'm not sure what it is. Can you tell me about it?

Child 2: I'm happy to! Animal shelters are organizations that care for strays and other homeless pets.

Child 3: They try to find permanent homes for the pets they take in.

Child 1: How do pets end up at the shelter?

Child 2: There are lots of ways pets end up at the shelter. A lot of times Animal Control Officers find dogs and cats running loose with no tags. They bring the animals to the shelter to keep them safe.

Child 3: Hopefully the owners come for them, but sometimes they don't and the animal remains at the shelter.

Child 1: Wow! That's sad! How else do animals end up at the shelter?

Child 2: Well, I know this is hard to believe, but sometimes people don't want their pets anymore, so they bring them to the shelter and hope someone else will adopt them.

Child 1: But having a pet means you keep and take care of them their whole life!



Angels For Animals
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Child 3: Well, you and I know that, but sometimes people don't realize how much work it is to have a pet! Hey, _____, my family is volunteering at the shelter today. Would you like to come with us?

Child 1: What do you mean volunteer? What do you do there?

Child 2: We help clean cages and walk the dogs. It's fun! It would give you a chance to see what kinds of pets are available for adoption!

Child 1: I'd love to go! Let me ask my mom!

Child 1 runs "home" to ask her mom about going to the shelter.

Mom: Hi, _____! You look excited, what's up?

Child 2: _____ and _____ have asked me if I want to go to the animal shelter with them. They said there are lots of great pets to adopt! Maybe we could get our new pet at the shelter and not at the pet store.

_____ says that when you get a dog from the shelter, you're helping your community!

Mom: _____ is right. Adopting a pet from the shelter means that they get a permanent home for life and don't have to live at the shelter! What a great idea.



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You may go to the shelter and look around at all the pets they have to offer. If you see some pets that would work well with our family, we'll all go tomorrow!

Child 1: Thanks, Mom!

Child 1 runs off to meet her friend.

Child 1: Great news! My mom said I could go!

Dad: _____, I'm so glad you're joining us today! We really enjoy our work at the shelter. It feels good to help make the animals happy!

The family gets in their car and drive to the shelter.

ASA: Hi everyone! It's good to see you again! It looks like you've brought a friend.

Dad: Yes, this is _____. His family is looking for a pet. We thought we would bring him along today to see all of the great animals that can be adopted at the shelter.

ASA: Great idea! Come on, _____, I'll show you around and later you can join the others in their volunteer work!

Child 1: Sounds fun!



ASA: This is our small animal room. We have mice, rats, guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, ferrets, snakes and many kinds of lizards in this room.

Child 1: Wow! I didn't know shelters had these types of animals too!

ASA: Many times families don't understand the amount of work even small animals can be, so they end up here at the shelter.

Child 1: There are a lot of cute animals in here. But my family is looking to get a cat or dog.

ASA: Well, come along then. We'll visit the cats and dogs.

Child 1: Wow...there are so many! They're all so cute! Why would anyone want to give up these great animals?

ASA: Let's read some of these kennel cards. It will give you an idea.

Child 1 starts looking at the kennel cards.

Child 1: This one says the family was moving and couldn't bring the dog. This one says the owner died. This one was picked up as a stray, and this one says grown too large! This is really sad! Don't people realize that pets are for life?



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ASA: Most people do, _____. That's why so many pets have great lives. However, not every family thinks through these important decisions well enough and their animals end up here. Let's go meet up with your friends now. Have you seen any pets your family may want to adopt?

Child 1: I've seen lots! Thanks for showing me around!

ASA: My pleasure, _____!

They return to where the family is working.

Dad: Hi, _____. Did you see any pets you like?

Child 1: I sure did, Mr. _____! Thanks so much for taking me! I can't wait to tell my family that the animal shelter is a great place to get a pet!