

Saturday at the Animal Shelter



A Play Production



Introduction

Saturday at the Animal Shelter is a play designed to be performed by elementary school classes, particularly by students in the 1st - 3rd 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

Saturday at the Animal Shelter was written to be performed by a group of about 7 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 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



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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:

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

Dogs: 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. For the girl dogs, simply add bows on the ears and some fake eyelashes. Make the head come to life by creating 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. Decorate the wall to look like an animal shelter. Brick will look authentic. You can use red butcher paper and have parents and student draw bricks in gray or black all over the background. You may want to put real cages in front of the wall as props. You can have the students draw large pictures of cats and dogs, glue



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them on the paper decorated to look like brick. Then, either draw fencing over the dogs or add it with thin strips of butcher paper. Voila...an 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 students have learned their parts, and the show has been cast, you will start teaching 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 be quite rough. Please know that the kids will pull through when it counts.
- ♥ 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 rehearsal so students get used to 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



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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. Enjoy the entire experience. It may be rough at times, but the final performance will be worth it!

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.



Oral Presentation Assessment



Date: _____

Title of Play: _____

- Rehearsal
- Performance

Student Name: _____

Character Part: _____

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

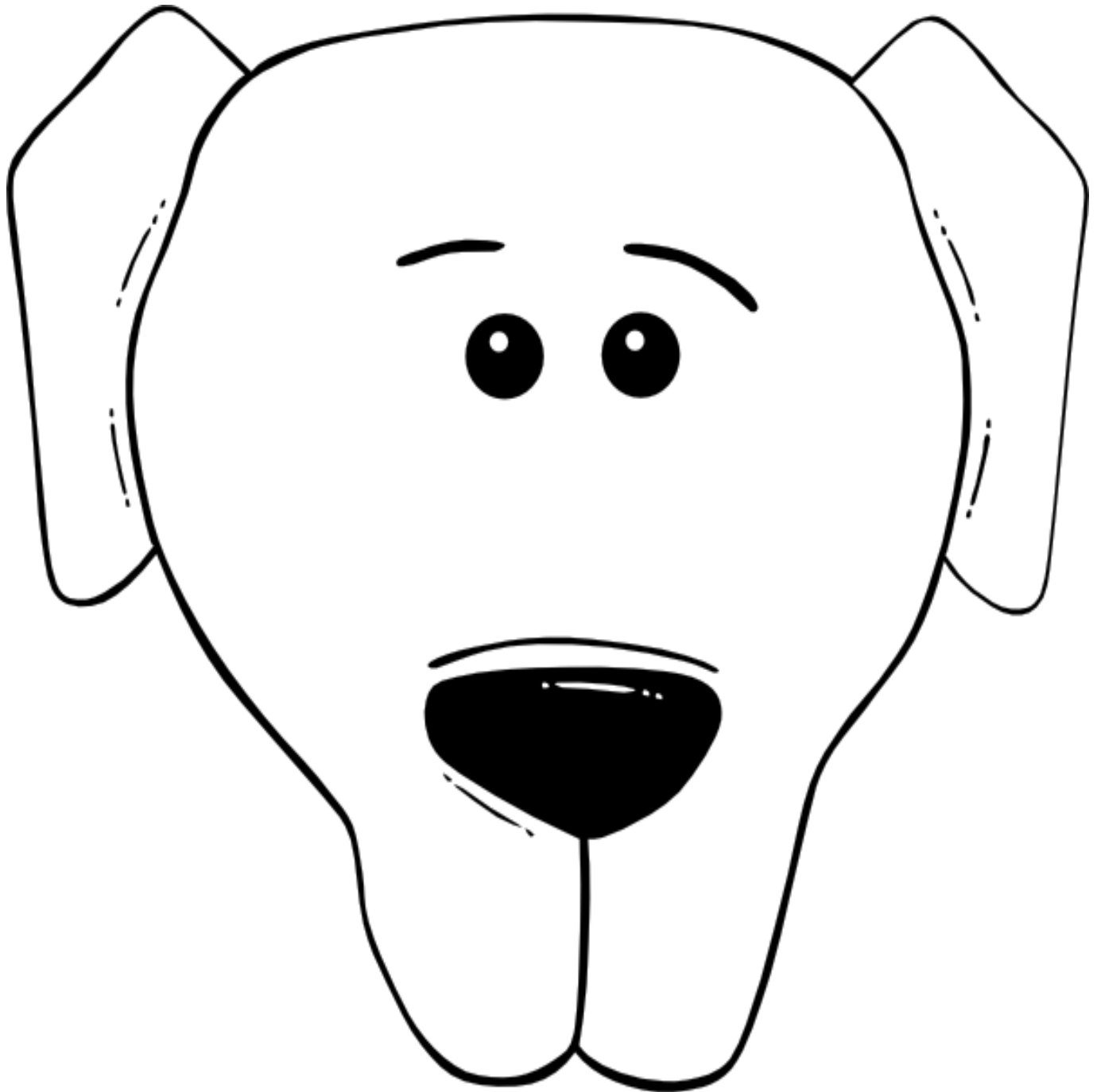
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|---|---|---|---|--------|
| 1. Student speaks clearly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Student speaks at appropriate pace. | | 1 | 2 | 3 4 |
| 3. Student speaks fluently, using appropriate intonation, expression, and emphasis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Student 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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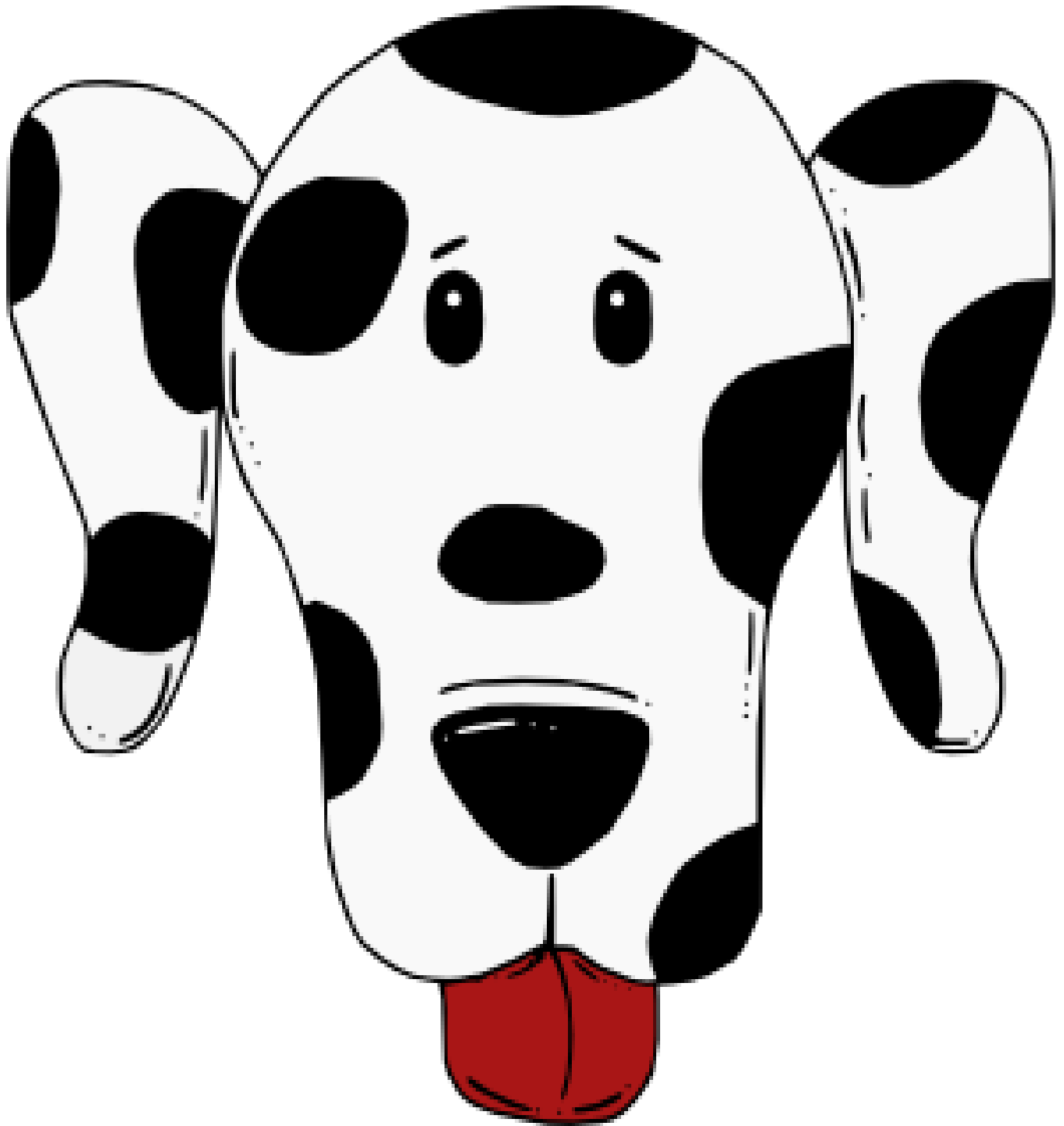


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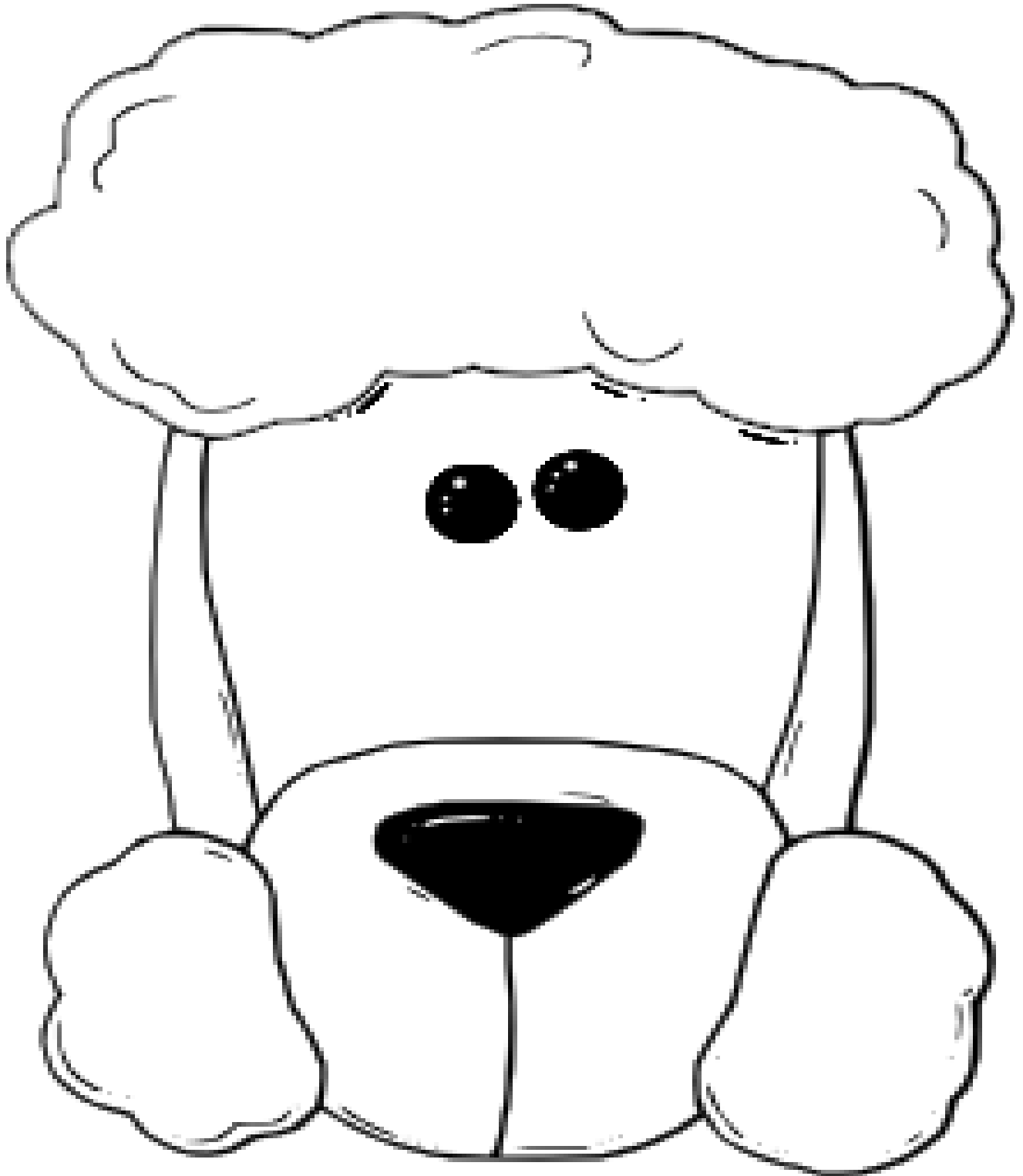


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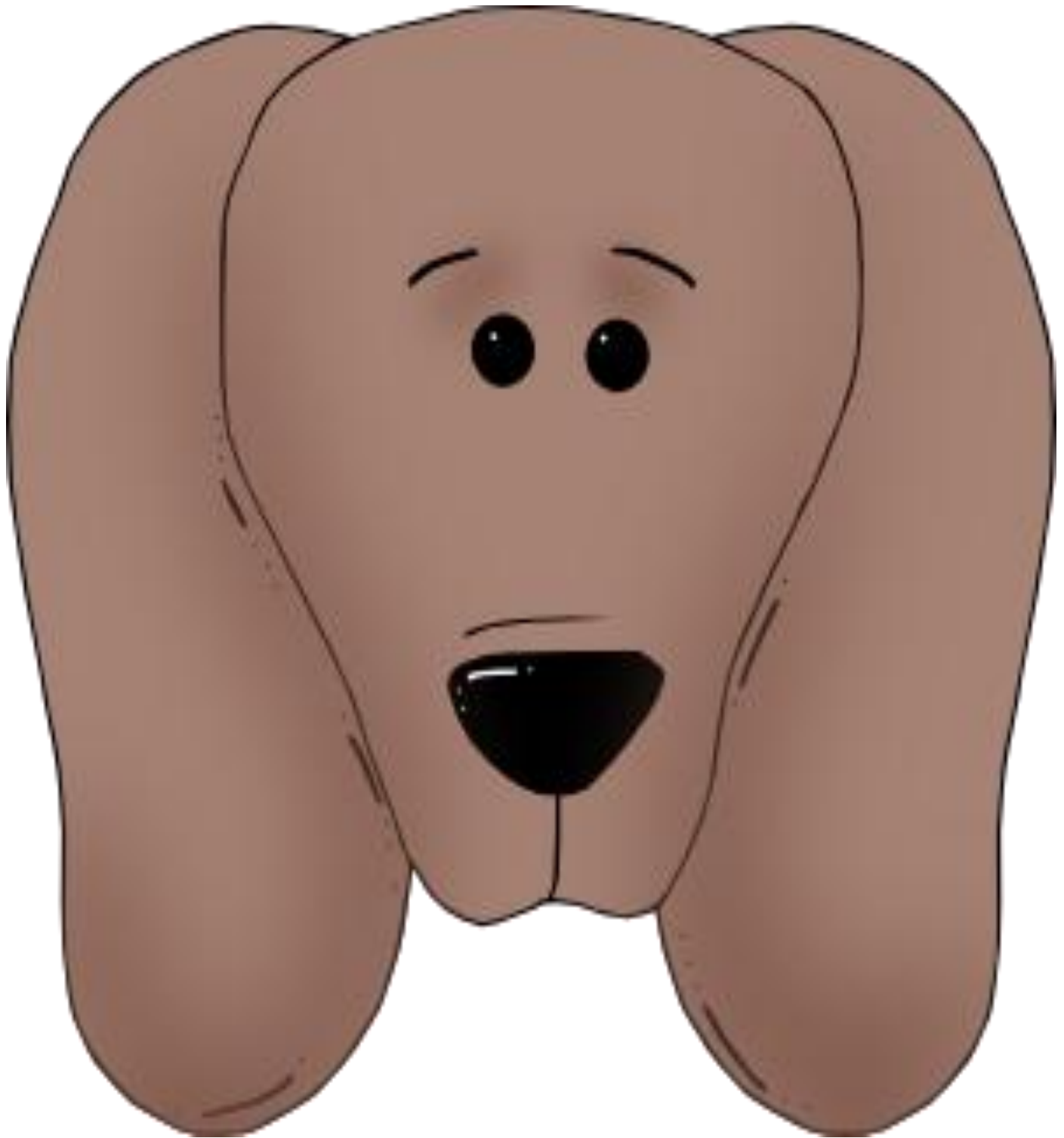


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Saturday at the Animal Shelter

Cast of Characters:

Narrator/Shelter Director

Beauty

Lady

Sparky

Jaz

Gus

Belle

Setting: The city animal shelter early on a Saturday morning.

Narrator: If you've ever been to the animal shelter to pick out a pet you know how excited the dogs get when you walk into the area where they are housed. Today we're going to give you the inside scoop as to why they might act this way.

Beauty: All right troops rise and shine its Saturday morning. Saturdays are always our best chance for adoption, so look alive! The humans will be by soon to get our pens neat and tidy for the big day. Now, if you want to be adopted, just listen to me!

Sparky: (waving his paws all around) OOO-OOO...ME, Beauty! ME! ME! ME! I want to be adopted today.



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Jaz: (waving his paws all around, too) me too, Beauty! I **LOVE** to be adopted! I've been adopted 4 times already! I just keep coming back here because all my owners say I'm too **HYP**ER!

Gus: Well little buddy, don't get your hopes up. Did you know that most people still buy their pets at a pet store instead of checking their local animal shelter for the perfect pet?

Belle: I think adoption sounds scary. I think I'll just stay here with all of my good friends. I'll be in the corner of my cage if anyone needs me!

Beauty: Now everyone just hold on a doggone minute. Let me get a few things straight. Belle, adoption isn't scary! It's your chance to live in a real home with a real family, and that's the best feeling in the whole world! Gus, you're right a large percentage of people still buy their pets at a pet store, but that doesn't mean we haven't got a chance! Lots and lots of people will be coming through this shelter today looking for the perfect pet. If you'll all just settle down, I'll show you how to show them that you're the right one for them!

Lady: Gus is right, y'all! You got to look on the bright side! The perfect family is just waiting to take you home! Let's start with the basics Gus.

Rule number 1 for getting adopted: Look perky and happy!

Sparky: (jumping around in circles) OOO...OOO I can do that, just watch me! (Sparky jumps around in circles)

Jaz: WOOHOO, Sparky! Let's get **CRAZY**!



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Gus: Whoa there little fella, you want to impress the family, not scare them! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Belle: (shaking) Oh...I don't know how to be perky and happy. I'm too scared!

Lady: Oh Belle, you're a true beauty. You can sit sweetly at the front of your cage and a wonderful family is sure to notice you!

Belle: Do you really think so, Lady?

Lady: I know so, Belle!

Beauty: Let's get back to work troops before the cleaning crew comes!

Rule number 2 for getting adopted: Show them you're happy to see them. Do a trick, chase your tail!

Gus: I got a better idea. How about if I chase Sparky's tail? (Gus goes after Sparky. Both are yipping and running around).

Jaz: Chase my tail too, Gus! Oh PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE!

Lady: That's enough of that boys and girls! Now, everyone listen up for the last rule.

Rule number 3 for getting adopted: Never bark wildly (looks pointedly at Jaz). Families don't want a crazy barker. Yip quietly and wag your tail. Like this... (Lady demonstrates)



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Gus: Well, this has been fun, kids. I'm going back to my pen for a nap before the excitement begins!

Sparky: I'm going back to my pen to dream of the perfect family. Thanks for all your tips Gus and Lady.

Jaz: I'm going to do 300 back flips, several circle runs, and THEN I'll take a nap!

Belle: I'm going to the corner of my pen to try and work up some courage! I think I can....I think I can...I think I can...

A group of people walk into the shelter. All the animals begin to sit up and take notice. Belle is walking slowly to the front chanting "I think I can". Sparky is chasing his tail and yipping excitedly. Gus, Lady and Beauty are all sitting at the front of their pens nicely.

Narrator/Shelter Director: Welcome to the shelter folks. We hope you find the pet you're looking for today.

Families walk around the cages. The audience hears lots of positive talk about the animals. The Shelter Director is talking to the families about the animals.

Family 1: We like this one. (Belle) Could we take her out?

Shelter Director: Of course. She's a real sweetie.

Another family takes Sparky out. An older couple takes out Gus. Eventually all the families walk out with Belle, Sparky, Jaz and Gus.



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Beauty: Well, Lady...today was a good day! It made my heart swell just to see our friends leave with their new families.

Lady: Today wasn't our day, Beauty. But you're right; it was good to see our friends get adopted.

Beauty: Let's go over those rules one more time, Lady. The day is still young; maybe the right family will come for us, too!
The show ends with Buster and Lady sitting with their heads together going over the rules.

Narrator: Remember everyone! Pet stores aren't the only places to get a GREAT pet. Your local animal shelter has some FANTASTIC pets just waiting to join your family