

What to do if your dog is missing:

There are many ideas here. Please don't feel you have to do them all right away, but we feel it's important to provide you with as many ideas as possible to help you find your dog. Start with our "5 THINGS TO DO" in the photo tip and then work your way down this list. We are an all volunteer group and all of our services are completely FREE.

Search/List with Pet FBI & Lost Dogs Georgia (It's FREE!)

Go to www.PetFBI.org to search or list a lost/found pet.

Immediately:

- Scent Items: Put out food, water, and a scented item where your pet was last seen - their bed, favorite toy, an unlaundered article of your clothing, a towel or blanket that's been rubbed on their favorite dog buddy. **DO NOT** put out dry dog food; use smelly food to lure them in – canned dog or cat food, Solid Gold Tripe, or tuna!
- Property Search: Search the immediate area inside your home and around your property and nearby property. Check closets, behind and under furniture, garages, vehicles, outdoor sheds, window wells, ponds, canals, swimming pools, fencing, places where your dog could have fallen in or be stuck in, trapped. Ask permission to check your neighbors property (be as thorough as allowed) and ask them to check their outdoor security cameras as well. This may give you a clue as to the direction your dog was headed. Check walking paths that you and your dog frequently use. Make sure to hand out flyers to neighbors in that area. Do not rely on your dog making noise. Search thoroughly.
- Communications Coordinator: Assign one person to be the point person for communications and coordination. Determine what phone number and email address to use in all advertisements and on social media. Make sure spam folders and voicemail messages and text are checked often.
- Choose your photo: Locate a good clear photo of your dog. The photo should show the dog's entire body with his face facing the camera and any unusual features or markings. This photo will be used for many things we suggest on this list such as flyers and online post. Try to use the very best photo possible! A good photo may mean the difference between someone recognizing your dog and being returned to you - or not. If you have several photos that show your dog from different angles, you can use [Pixlar Express](#) to create a collage. Please crop out any distractions such as people, children, furniture and other pets. You want the photo of your dog to be large and the main focal point on the photo.

- Change your outgoing message for incoming calls and leads: Change your outgoing message on your answering machine/voicemail asking for the date, time, and location that the caller may have seen your missing dog. Ask them to include the following answers: Which direction was your dog headed? Was the dog alone or with another dog or person? Was the dog walking or running? Injured? Ask them to leave a detailed message and include their name and phone number in case you have questions. Please see: [Why Voicemail Becomes Very Important When Your Dog is Lost](#).
- Contact your shelter and report your dog missing: Immediately contact your local shelter to make sure your dog has not been reported to the shelter as "found". Ask how to file a lost report and ALWAYS send a photo with your contact information. After 24 hours you will need to physically visit the shelter to look for your dog. Most shelters only allow 72 before pets are put up for adoption or euthanized. Go in person and as often as possible.
- Microchipped pets: If your dog is microchipped, contact your microchip company to report your dog lost and to make sure your contact information is correct. If you have the chip number but don't know who to call, use www.petmicrochiplookup.org. If you don't have the number, contact the veterinarian, rescue or shelter who implanted it. It will also likely be with any adoption records you have.
- Rabies tag: If your dog is wearing a rabies tag: Contact your vet/shelter (whoever administered the vaccine) to notify them that your dog is lost. Make sure they have your current phone number.

Special circumstances:

- **Senior Dogs:** There is a common myth that a senior dog who is missing has wandered off to die. While their age may put them at a disadvantage when they become lost, there may be medical issues that prevent them from finding their way back home. Seniors can suffer from a canine form of dementia. They may stand in front of a hinged door waiting for it to be opened or stare at an inside wall for several minutes before moving on. The same medical conditions that cause this type of behavior in pets may also cause a senior dog to unintentionally wander beyond familiar boundaries where they may become disoriented, confused and unable to navigate their way back home. Please don't make assumptions that your old dog does not want to be found. He or she is relying on YOU to bring him/her safely home. One of the most important things you can do in the search for a senior is conduct a grid search of the area where your dog was lost. Enlist the help of friends and family members, but advise them to move slowly and keep the noise at a minimum. The last thing you want to do is further frighten a scared dog who is already disoriented and confused. Make sure to search every inch of the terrain. Look in tall grass, under decks, in drainage ditches, under vehicles, boats, campers, in outdoor sheds, garages, window wells, ponds, canals, swimming pools, fencing, and places where your dog could have fallen in or may be stuck or trapped. Also look off steep cliffs where your dog may have wandered and taken a fall. Ask permission to check your neighbors property (be as thorough as allowed) and ask them to check their outdoor security cameras as well. This may give you a clue as to the direction your dog was headed. Next, do an aerial search of your area using Google Maps. This will give you an idea of the bodies of water nearby. A lost dog will immediately search for water which is key to their survival. This can include any rivers, streams, ponds or lakes in the area. Pay close attention to low areas in the water where your dog can enter but may not be able to easily climb out. Because of mobility issues, they may travel downhill or on the path of least resistance. Keep that in mind while conducting your search. Alert your neighbors by handing out flyers door-to-door or by doing driveway drops. A dog with mobility issues may not wander far and may be picked up or in hiding just a few houses away. Also pay attention to any neighbors who feed outdoor dogs or cats. Your dog will be looking not only for water, but for a stable outdoor food source. Follow our tips on putting out scent items, placing intersection signs, notifying your local animal control facility, notifying your microchip company, etc... Remember, dogs (even seniors) have amazing survival skills. We've seen seniors survive on their own for several days, weeks and even months. Never give up unless you have physical proof that your pet is deceased.
- **Dogs lost from a place other than home:** Dogs lost at rest stops, parks, from veterinary clinics or from auto accidents often stay in the same general area. Dogs that bolt from any place other than "home" often double back to the exact spot they ran away from. Many will return late at night or early morning when there is minimal activity at the location. Place scent items in the area and flyer the area heavily and use large neon intersection signs to alert passing motorists about your missing dog. For our detailed search tips on dogs lost from a place other than home, read our article here: [Tips For Dogs Who Are Lost From Somewhere Other Than Home](#)
- **Dogs lost while camping or RVing:** Read our detail search article for [Dogs Lost While Camping or RVING](#)

- **Puppies:** Much like seniors, young puppies require a grid search of the area. Follow the search guide shown for seniors with one addition - Play a video with sounds of other young puppies crying. This will sometimes give the puppy a sound to follow or lure them out of hiding. If you have the mother dog, put her on a leash and see if she can guide you to the pup.
- **Stolen:** We discourage advertising your missing dog as "stolen" because it makes it less likely for your dog to be returned to you. Even when a dog is known to be stolen, we still treat them as lost. Thieves sometimes let them go, or the dog gets away and then the dog truly IS lost. If a dog is advertised as stolen, the person who finds them may be reluctant to return them to you because they're afraid of being accused or don't want to get involved. Also, if people see your dog running loose, they will assume it's a different dog, since they believe a stolen dog will be in someone's possession, therefore they won't notify you or confine the dog when they see them. We suggest that you create an awareness campaign using flyers and large intersections signs in the area your dog was last seen. This will alert the public and someone with information about your dog may come forward. If you do know the identity of the person who has your dog, please immediately file a police report and email lostdogsgeorgia@gmail.com for additional advice.
- **Newly Adopted Dogs:** In our experience even newly adopted dogs have a good chance of coming back to their house, or very will remain very close by. Make a scent trail to your home door using liquid smoke or bbq sauce, preferably the smoke! Water the liquid smoke down, 4 parts water to one part smoke. Put it in a spray bottle and spray bushes etc. at dog level. Drizzle it in a spoke pattern leading to some very smelly people food. Dogs often come back in the wee hours of the morning, but may just watch from a distance. Do a quiet and thorough search of your yard and the neighbors at dawn. Don't let anyone come to your home that your dog doesn't know. The scent of strangers will make the dog wary of coming into your yard.
- **Apartment Complex:** Place a big, bright, eye-catching sign in your window and on your front door with a photo of your dog and your phone number. Place a flyer at the front office, mailbox center, laundromat, gym, and anywhere the site management will permit. Place a large neon sign at the front of your complex. Tag your car as shown below.

Prepare Flyers and Intersection signs:

Flyers continue to be the #1 way to locate a missing pet. When used in conjunction with signs, you create an awareness campaign on the ground that will reach hundreds of people who are passing by on their way to school, work, shopping, etc. Flyers and signs work while you sleep or are away from the search area. They can help generate sightings and may be seen by the one person who has information about your missing pet. We suggest you place large intersections in a 1 to 5 miles radius of where your dog was lost or last spotted. Remember, dogs can travel much further than you think.

Flyers:

- Quickly print and post flyers in the area your dog was last seen. Lost pet flyers have been around for ages and are the symbol of a lost pet. When posted in your area, people easily recognize that someone in the area is searching for their missing pet and they are on alert. A well covered flyer will hold up in the weather for a few days and draw attention to the area where your dog is lost. In addition, they are a cheap, fast and an effective tool to use when time is of the essence. Your goal is to get something out in the area immediately and in as many places as possible. Decide on the quantity needed, proofread to make sure your contact information is correct and print. To make your flyers last longer in the elements, add a moisture protection barrier. You can do this by using plastic sheet protectors and taping them closed. Hang them upside down with the sealed opening facing the ground. We've even heard of owners using Ziplock bags or clear tape to cover their flyer. Using cardboard or poster board as a base to staple your flyer to will also make it stand up to the weather. Use whatever tools you have on hand and get your flyers out immediately. CAUTION: Do not place your flyers inside or outside of mailboxes. This is a federal violation! We suggest Driveway Drops highlighted below.
- Another option is to mail flyers or cards with a door to door service such as [USPS Every Door Direct Mail®](#). You pick the neighborhoods you want to reach, and the mail carrier takes them to each home while delivering the mail. Click on the link for more details.

Large Neon Intersection signs:

While flyers are a crucial part of your search, we also suggest adding large neon intersection signs to your search plan. Signs are large and eye catching and can be easily viewed and photographed from a car. While you are out distributing and placing flyers, ask a friend or family member to pick up the supplies needed to make several signs. Put out as many as your budget will allow.

Supplies needed to make an effective sign:

- Several sheets of large, neon colored poster board. One 22 x 28 sheet will make 2 large intersection signs.
- Garden stakes from your local hardware store
- Large black permanent jumbo markers (Magnum Size)
- Duct tape
- Clear packing tape or clear shelf liner
- Industrial stapler
- Strong backing such as cardboard for reinforcement of the poster board. At one time we recommended using foam board for posters. Foam board is a quick option when money allows. But foam board can be hard to find and cost well over \$6.00 a sheet. We've found that any type of cardboard can be cut and taped to the poster board to provide more structure and protection from the elements. If you'd still like to use foam board check with your nearest office supply store.
- A large, clear photo of your dog. * See above guidelines on selecting a good photo of your dog.

Start by cutting the poster board in half and lay it on a flat surface. Next position your flyer in the center of the poster and apply a small piece of tape the corners to hold the position. Above the photo (and in large BOLD letters no smaller than the size of your hand) write the words "LOST DOG" or "LOST PIT BULL". Below the photo (and in the same size letters) write the phone number of the point person who will be the contact for all sightings. Next attach any additional backing. Then lay the poster on a flat surface and start to cover the poster board with the clear packing tape or clear shelf liner. Flip as needed. This will act as a layer of protection against rain and moisture. Make sure to cover both sides and make sure the edges are covered and sealed to prevent any moisture from entering the poster board. Finalize your sign by stapling them to the garden stake at eye level and then adding a layer of duct tape for reinforcement.

Another idea is to place the flyer in a large sheet protector (or Ziplock bag) and seal shut. Tape the flyer to your poster board. This is a little easier than covering the entire poster board in tape, but your sign will not last as long outside in the elements. ALWAYS use a large permanent marker to prevent the ink from running.

Driveway Drops:

- Map out the area you want to target.
- Choose how many individual flyers you will need.
- Print your flyers 4 to a sheet to fit the bags.
- Cut and then place the printed flyers in cheap, sealable sandwich bags.
- Add a few small rocks or pebbles to each bag to keep the wind from blowing them away.
- Have one person drive and while the passenger tosses a bag in each driveway in your target area.

Tutorial is available on our sister site, Lost Dogs Illinois - [Click here](#)

Tag your car:

Create awareness in your neighborhood by placing lost pet flyers in the windows of your car. Use the largest photo possible with only the words "LOST DOG" and your phone number.

In addition, you can use your car as a rolling billboard by purchasing special markers designed for writing on car windshields. With the marker write LOST DOG, breed, color, and your phone number. The people most likely to have seen your pet live in your neighborhood.

Suggested markers: NeoMarker Waterproof marker - 1/2 broad neon tip.

NeoMarkers may be removed with Windex and will stain clothing or cloth material. Make sure to use a disposable rag to remove markings.

Physical Search: This includes placing and distributing flyers and large intersection signs

Get a map of the area, divide the map into sections, at least 3 miles in every direction from where the dog was lost, assign each section to a volunteer to look for the dog, hand out flyers and post flyers and intersection signs.

- Each team member should carry tasty treats, water, a leash, poster materials (duct tape, flyers, intersection signs, hammer, mallet, staple gun), and a cell phone.
- Distribute flyers to neighbors (go door to door if safe) and hand deliver a flyer to each household in the area where your dog was last seen. People are more likely to remember your dog and get involved if they have talked with you in person. Be sure to tell people not to chase or call your dog, which can cause them to run farther from where they were lost, or run into traffic! Instead, ask them to call you immediately with any sighting. In addition, print your flyer 4 to a sheet and cut them to give them to delivery people since they spend considerable time in the area - UPS, FedEx, your mail carrier, pizza delivery, even bus drivers!
- Place large neon intersection signs in areas with the most traffic. Put them at eye height for a driver to see.
- Put a large neon sign in your front yard.
- Other examples of where to post flyers and signs include: Busy intersections, in veterinary clinics, your local shelter, local pet stores, groomers, dog parks, pet stores, grocery stores, local feed stores, farmers market, gas station windows, community events and pet adoption events.
- Post flyers anywhere a large number of people pass. You are trying to reach that one person who has information about your lost dog. If your dog is not microchipped, put priority on getting flyers to nearby vet offices and places with scanners first, before a finder takes your dog in to get it scanned. Hand deliver flyers to vet offices; don't just call.
- Make sure your team knows not to call or chase your dog if he/she is seen. This may make your dog feel threatened and panic which could cause them to run even further, possibly into traffic. Even the friendliest dog may run from fear. Many dogs go into "survival" mode and may not even seem to recognize their owner at first. You want to sit or lie down, avert your eyes, don't talk to the dog, lure the dog in with tasty treats.

Shelter search:

- Go to your local shelter. Bring along two of the large flyers that you created from Pet FBI. One will be for the front desk and the other for the bulletin board. While there, file a lost dog report but don't assume the shelter will call you if your pet is found. Your dog may look different after a few days outside and not resemble the picture you supplied them. You'll recognize them, but a stranger may not. Check back daily - if at all possible, in person. While we work closely with shelters/animal control, we are not affiliated with them, so it's very important that you contact them as soon as possible.
- Check shelters in the surrounding counties too. Pets travel farther than you think! Good Samaritans often pick up lost pets and take them to the shelter that's closest and most convenient for them. The shelters are run separately, so you'll need to contact each one. Pets are only kept for a mandatory hold period – often only several days. After that, if your dog doesn't have a microchip that can be traced back to you, they are either put up for adoption and adopted (permanently) by someone, transferred to a rescue, or possibly even euthanized. Finding your pet within a few days is critical! Continue to monitor shelters until your dog is home - sometimes dogs are taken to the shelter weeks, months, even years after they are first lost.
- Notify local Police Departments and city government. Many Police Departments have short term stray holding facilities.
- Find out who picks up deceased animals in your city and contact them. This might be the highway or public works department or it may be contracted out.
- Make sure you visit ALL kennels in the shelter. Some shelters will have kennels that are not accessible to the public for injured or bite dogs. You must ask about these.
- If your dog has been gone for more than 72 hours, make sure you check areas and locations containing adoptable dogs, not just those containing strays.
- Post flyers in each location and check back often to make sure the flyer is still posted. Also check any "found" flyers posted in the area.

Set up a feeding or comfort station:

- Set up a feeding station (preferably in front of a camera) close to where the dog was lost. A feeding station should contain smelly food and water which is vital to your dog's survival. Move the feeding station closer to sightings as appropriate. Keep a record of all sightings and make a map of the sighting locations.

See our guide on how to effectively set up a feeding station here: [How to set up a feeding station](#).

Use other FREE online websites:

- Nextdoor: Create a free listing using the Nextdoor App. It's a popular free site that is local to your neighborhood and your listing may be seen by someone in your area who has information about your missing pet. **IMPORTANT:** While Nextdoor is a free app and has been very helpful in the recovery of lost pets, it has its limits. Only people in your immediate area are allowed to join your neighborhood group. That means if you are traveling and your dog is lost in a place other than home or your dog crosses county lines, you may not have access to the Nextdoor site where your dog is listed as found. Shelters and clinics are also restricted from searching every neighborhood site in your area. This is why it is vitally important to enter your dog's information into the PetFBI centralized database where listings are made public and can be seen by everyone.
- Craigslist: Many people who find a lost pet will place a found ad on Craigslist. Listings for lost pets can be found under the "Lost and Found" section, so check there frequently to see if your pet has been listed as found. In addition, create your own "lost listing" using the photo you selected above. Remember to use caution when responding to any online reply to your lost listing. Most people are good and want to help you reunite with your lost pet. But known scammers will prey on owners with missing pets and may claim to have your pet and demand money for their return. **ALWAYS** ask for proof that they have your lost pet such as photos with your dog and **ALWAYS** take someone with you and meet in a well known, busy area. Also watch under the "Pet Section" of Craigslist to make sure your dog isn't being sold or re-homed by someone. Check postings that sound similar to your dog. Many people aren't familiar with breeds and one person's medium dog is another's large dog, etc. Click [here](#) for a list of Craigslist cities in Georgia. Setting your view to "gallery" allows you to see large photos without having to click on each listing. You can also sign up to receive email alerts from Craigslist for possible matches for your lost dog.
- Social Media: Social media has become a very popular tool for owners with lost pets. Many sites will allow you to post your listing free of charge and followers will help monitor the sites for a match. Places to watch include local and state Facebook pages and groups, local shelter, rescue and veterinary clinic pages and online yard sale groups for your community. Check these sites often to see if your dog is listed there or has been placed up for adoption or is being rehome.

- Homeowners Association and other neighborhood organizations. Post to the Facebook pages for these organizations. Check back often for found dog listings.
- Rescue and Adoption sites: Many dogs are adopted or sent to rescue after their stray hold is up at the local shelter. Make sure to check local rescues or breed specific rescues to see if your dog is listed there and up for adoption.
- Petfinder: Another useful site to search is [Petfinder.com](https://www.petfinder.com). Many rescues use this service to list the pets they have available for adoption. Click the link above to start your search.

Sightings:

- Use a separate map to record sightings. Record the date, time and exact location of each sighting.
- If you have had multiple sightings in the same area, put out items that smell familiar to your dog in that area. You can also add a feeding station and a trail camera in the area to verify a reported sighting.
- Avoid bringing in large groups to areas where there have been sightings as they may scare a lost dog and cause him/her to leave the area.
- Humane traps can be used to trap a dog but make sure you have the appropriate size and know how to use it. There are experts who can help. Talk to your local shelter to see what's available in your area.
- If you see your dog, look away and immediately sit down on the ground. This is less intimidating for your dog. Pretend to eat and toss a few tasty treats out around you. Crinkle a bag to generate interest. Be patient and speak softly or not at all. It may take a few minutes, or a few hours, but if you're patient, your dog may approach you.

No Sightings:

If there have been no sightings, start from the beginning and expand your search area. Replace any worn flyers and signs.

Rewards:

We strongly suggest not offering a reward for a lost pet because this encourages people to chase or call after them. One of the biggest threats to a lost pet is being chased into traffic (often by a well-meaning person), or running farther from their home. Because we don't want to endanger your pet, or encourage other people to offer a reward, we aren't able to post a flyer that says reward on it.

["Why we don't recommend offering a reward"](#) from Lost Dogs of America

Keep the faith....

The search for a lost dog can go on for days, months and in some cases even years. Unless you have physical proof that your dog is deceased, assume that he's out there and continue to be vigilant in your search.

- Keep your flyers and signs current and replace any that are weathered or worn. As time passes, expand the radius of your search by placing flyers and intersections signs further out.
- Continue to visit your local animal shelter several times a week and replace flyers as needed. Many times a finder will hold on to a pet for several weeks before surrendering them to the shelter.
- Follow your local shelter's Facebook page and check their lost/found and adoptable pets.
- Check adoption sites such as [petfinder.com](#), [petharbor.com](#) and [rescueme.com](#). Many lost pets are rescued and put up for adoption on these sites.

Above all, keep the faith. Your pet is out there and depending on you to help bring him home.

Once your dog is home:

- Take your dog to a veterinarian to be checked over.
- Remove all flyers and posters. Take down web postings and discontinue ads. Let all agencies you contacted know the dog has been recovered and thank them for their assistance.
- If not already, make sure your dog is microchipped and wearing tags on a secure collar or harness.
- Update the status of your dog on the Pet FBI/Lost Dogs Georgia by changing the status. This hides your listing on our map and allows our volunteers to remove your post from our Facebook page. This also allows volunteers and shelter employees who frequent both sites to look for matches more efficiently by allowing them to focus their efforts on pets that are still lost and truly need their help.

NOTE: On our back home report we include a short survey. We appreciate details on how your dog was found. This helps us gather information about which strategies are most successful. We use this to develop better methods for finding other pets and share this with shelters, rescues, and animal control facilities. We also love to share stories of happy reunions and how they occurred.

Disclaimer: We reserve the right to screen back home surveys and post only what we feel is appropriate. We do not allow profanity, negative remarks, personal names or mention or referrals to paid sites, dog trackers, pet detectives, pet communicators or other paid services. While many of these sites and people are legitimate, we simply don't have the time to research and screen every person and every service out there. We want this site to be a safe place where owners can view the suggestions on our page without fear of being scammed. Thank you for understanding.

Additional articles on how to find a lost dog can be found on our parent site, Lost Dogs of America. Topics covered range from generating sightings, setting up a comfort/feeding station, setting a humane trap and additional tips that may not be covered here.

- To visit Lost Dogs of America, click the following link: [Lost Dogs of America](#)
- To listen to the Lost Dogs of America podcast for tips and suggestions visit Lost Dogs of America ratio at lostdogsofamerica.org/podcast/

Webinar sponsored by Lost Dogs of America and ASPCAPro on how to find a lost dog:
<http://vimeo.com/98630407>

About Lost Dogs Georgia

We are an all-volunteer group dedicated to reuniting lost dogs with their families. All of our services are provided free to dog owners, shelters/rescues, and animal control facilities.

Our mission:

- Provide ideas and resources to help owners locate their lost dogs
- Offer finders of lost dogs effective methods to reunite these dogs with their owners
- Reduce the number of "strays" in shelters, decreasing euthanasia rates
- Increase awareness that often a lost dog doesn't need a new home; they just need help getting back home.