

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 above and then work your way down this list. We are an all volunteer group and all of our services are completely FREE.

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. Don't 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. Do not rely on your dog making noise. Search thoroughly.
- 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 (see above) in the area and flyer the area heavily and use intersection signs to alert passing motorists about your missing dog. For more tips on dogs lost from a place other than home, visit <https://lostdogsofamerica.org/tips-for-dogs-that-are-lost-from-somewhere-other-than-home/>
- 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.
- 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. We suggest you use the Helping Lost Pets flyer as it has all the important information needed. 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 as often as possible.
- 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.
- 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.

Search/List with Helping Lost Pets & Lost Dogs Georgia (It's FREE!)

- Search Our listings: Search the Helping Lost Pets free lost and found database to see if a good Samaritan has found your dog and listed with us. Go to helpinglostpets.com to search. If you don't see your pet listed, immediately sign up for free alerts from helpinglostpets.com so you'll be notified when a pet is listed as found in your area. Remember to remove Helping Lost Pets from any spam filters.
- No match? If you don't see your pet listed as found, immediately create your FREE lost listing by going to www.HelpingLostPets.com/PET. This only takes a minute and instantly enters your pet in our FREE, fully searchable nationwide database for lost and found pets. HeLP is the largest FREE lost and found pet database in the nation with partner groups in every state. Your listing will be posted to the [Lost Dogs Georgia](#) Facebook page (if in Georgia) as well as to our other popular social media sites. Listing will also generate a free flyer for you to print and share. Please remember to proofread your listing and check for commonly known mistakes such as an incorrect phone number or the wrong gender of the pet. Make any necessary changes and save your changes before you log out.
- Sign up to receive free alerts: Helping Lost Pets sends lost pet alerts to members of the HeLP network who have opted in to receive those alerts. This may be animal control units, veterinary clinics or even members of your own community wanting to help. Owners can also sign up for free alerts so they will be notified whenever a pet is listed as found in their area. To sign up for alerts, go to: www.HelpingLostPets.com/ALERTS. Remember to remove helpinglostpets.com from from your spam filter.

Your Facebook post:

- Lost Dogs Georgia and Helping Lost Pets work in partnership to help more missing pets get home. When we receive your listing we will post your dog's flyer to our Facebook page. The link to your post on our page can be found in the email you receive through the Helping Lost Pets system. You can also find the link by going to www.HelpingLostPets.com and looking under the "MYPETS" section of the site. Use the link supplied to be taken to your post. Then "tag" yourself or comment on the post to ensure you receive updates from Facebook. Often someone who has information about your dog will post a comment on our page instead of contacting you. It is your responsibility to monitor your dog's post to watch for any new information from our followers. Also check your email regularly (spam box, too) for emails generated through the Helping Lost Pets system.
- Watch the "Community" section of our Facebook page. Many lost pets are listed here and we've seen many happy reunions from post created in this section. The link to our "Community" section can be found by clicking [THIS](#) link.

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.

Flyers:

- Start by printing the 4 per page Mini-Flyer offered by helpinglostpets.com and make at least 50 copies. These will be used to hand out to neighbors and people passing by the area.
- Next, 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. From helpinglostpets.com/MYPETS (once you've listed) select template #3 which will generate a free flyer with a large photo of our pet. 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.
- Another option is to mail flyers or cards with a door to door service such as [USPS Every Door Direct Mail®](http://USPS.com). 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 easily be 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
- 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 runs 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. At the time of this post this is one place that we were easily able to locate foam board.
- A large, clear photo of your dog. * See above guidelines on selecting a good photo 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. 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.

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.

Search:

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, give Mini Flyers to delivery people since they spend considerable time in the area - UPS, FedEx, your mail carrier, pizza delivery, even bus drivers!
- Place flyers and neon intersection signs in areas with the most traffic. Put them at eye height for a driver to see. Watch for "Found" signs.
- 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 helpinglostpets.com. 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 posted "found" flyers.

Other areas to post and search:

- 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 dogs 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 Helping Lost Pets centralized database where listings are made public and can be seen by everyone.
- Monitor Craigslist lost and found section: 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 know, busy area.
- Another area to watch on Craigslist: 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.
- Monitor online social media sites: 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.
- Alert your Homeowners Association and other neighborhood organizations. Post to the Facebook pages for these organizations. Check back often for found dog post.

Check 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 and approach you.
- The Missing Pet Partnership has a short video that's worth watching about how to safely approach a lost dog. This video is especially useful if you have a shy or nervous dog. <http://youtu.be/cmiZzB643is>

No Sightings:

If there have been no sightings, start from the beginning and expand your search area.

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. Click here if you believe your dog was stolen.

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 "[Loose Dog? Don't chase! Stop, Drop and Lie Down](#)" from No Dog About It Blog.

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 Helping Lost Pets website/Lost Dogs Georgia by changing to "Back Home" at <http://www.helpinglostpets.com/mypets>. 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 tips and resources from our parent organization, Lost Dogs of America:

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

We hope these tips are helpful, and that you are reunited with your dog very soon!! If you have questions or we can help in any way, please visit us on Facebook or email us at lostdogsgeorgia@gmail.com

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.