



*Fast Friends

Are you tired of the rat race? We suggest telling it to a buddy that will understand—a retired greyhound. Our own **Monica Hesse** shares the lowdown on hound adoption.

More than 19,000 greyhounds slide out of the fast lane and into adoption every year. Makes sense: they're great pets—and surprisingly low maintenance. They shed little, bark even less, learn quickly, and are highly devoted to their owners. Want one? Adoption might be for you if you can:

→ Get off the fast track

The biggest misconception about greyhounds is that you have to be an Olympic sprinter to own one, says Denise Davis, founder of West Virginia-based Greyhound Rescue Inc. In reality, dog lovers refer to the breed as the 45-Mile-an-Hour Couch Potato. "Retired greyhounds don't want or need a lot of exercise," says Davis. "A brisk walk a day is plenty." The only way in which Bowser's

velocity might become a problem, according to Davis: "Your dog might beat you to the sofa." Be warned, though: just because your pooch doesn't seem interested in running doesn't mean it can't. "Never take your dog off of its leash unless you're in an enclosed space," warns Davis. "If it decides to take off, you'll remember that those puppies can *run!*"

→ Be a homebody

During their careers greyhounds live in kennels with other racers and get used to constant companionship. Upside: most can be easily socialized, and they are comfortable meeting new people and dogs. Downside: because of their communal rearing, some hounds are susceptible to separation anxiety if left alone for long

periods of time. If you're doing 80 hours a week at the office, this dog's not your speed. Try a goldfish. But if you're retired or you work part-time, it's a match made in doggy heaven.

→ Make a warm reception

Greyhounds are built for speed; they have thinner skin and lower body fat than most breeds. This means they tend to do best in moderate climates (or in homes with air conditioning). If you live in North Dakota, Fido needs a jacket. Try a pet-supply store or www.classycanine.com (540-338-2275), which specializes in greyhound coats and donates a portion of its profits to a rescue organization. But no matter what climate you live in, your pooch should primarily be an indoor dog.

→ Build a retreat

It's easy for people to take a look at dog crates and think "jail." But racing greyhounds are trained to think of theirs as calm, private spaces—sort of how you view your den. Crates are integral parts of a hound's sense of well-being. Crating should never be used as punishment or for more than a few hours.

→ Avoid a cat-astrophe

It's a myth that greyhounds and cats don't mix. We've even known a few of the former that have curled up with bunnies (collective "Awww!"). But greyhounds are sight hounds, which means that anything small and fast reads to Rex like another day at the racetrack. If you have a cat, mention it to the rescue agency when you first visit, suggests Kelly Connolly, an issues specialist with the U.S. Humane Society. The agency can ensure it sends you home with a dog that's been kitty-proofed and won't mistake Fluffy for dinner.

If this will be your first doggy adoption, get informed by taking the "Which Dog Is Right for Me?" quiz at www.raisingcanine.com. If you're ready to rescue, log on to www.greyhoundpets.org (800-366-1472). The site will help you find a greyhound organization near you. ■