



The Stolen Dog: Action Plan

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This guide was created for those who believe that their dog has been stolen. However, there are several great tips in here for those who have missing dogs, as well. The goal of this resource is to help people to mobilize a community into looking for their dog.

Step 1: Has your dog really been stolen?

It is important to do your best to verify that your dog was stolen prior to calling the police or accusing others.

- Were there any witnesses?
- Did you see it happen?
- Are you involved in any domestic disputes/ family problems/ have any enemies?
- What signs have led you to conclude that your dog was stolen?
- Make sure to run your block and call for your dog and/or look for any evidence.

You want to gather as much information as you possibly can, as this will go a long way towards helping others to assist you.

Step 2: Report it

If you are absolutely certain that your dog has been stolen, you will want to contact the police immediately. The sooner you can file a police report and get the information in the system, the better. If you are unsure if your dog was stolen, or has simply gone missing, you may report it to other agencies.



Typical agencies to alert:

- Is there a Lost Dogs group near you? Contact them for assistance.
- Call your local animal control and ask for help.
- Call your local humane society to see if someone has turned your dog in.
- Look for animal rescues nearby - call them and ask for assistance.

Step 3: Now What?

You'll want to devote an equal amount of time to using your social media and to putting up flyers.

****If you are uncomfortable with putting your phone number on the flyer I suggest that you get a google phone number and have it directed to your own personal number and/or purchase a pre-paid phone from a store. ****

- **Creation of flyers** - IF you have to choose between social media and flyers - **FLYER FIRST**.
 - If your dog has been stolen - **prominently display STOLEN DOG** across the top with a huge picture. You have little time to capture people's interest. The less words - the better.
 - **Point out any definitive marks on your dog** - breeds don't always mean much. Does he have a white leg? A black mark on his back? Write his most definitive mark. This is crucial to help people identify - many dogs look similar.
 - **Only include personal information that you want shared**. It isn't recommended that you put your address down.
 - **Limit the amount of words**. You have very little time to catch people's attention.
 - **Create a PDF and a JPEG of your poster**. The JPEG is easily shared on social networks and the PDF is a better file to email and print in a large size.
 - **Painters tape**, duct tape, and the packing tape with the strings in it are the best for poles.



- If you enter a business and they say NO to hanging your flyer up - **ask them to post it in the break room or to take it personally and share with their friends.** Never take NO for an answer. (This works in supermarkets, Walgreen's, etc.).
 - **Liquor Stores and Gas Stations** see a TON of traffic. Post there.
 - **Post on poles at intersections** - make it face where the driver would see it easily if they were waiting at a light.
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- **Print as many flyers as you can.** Color is better, but black and white helps too.
 - **Locations to post flyers:**
 - Bus stops
 - Liquor stores
 - Coffee shops
 - Bars
 - Tattoo shops (very helpful)
 - Pet stores
 - Supermarkets
 - Light poles by shopping malls
 - Your neighborhood
 - Schools *children are VERY observant*
 - In your car window
 - In front of restaurants
 - Bicycle shops
 - Hand to - postmen, ups, FedEx, etc. (they can't post them but they can carry them with them personally)
 - Running shops
 - **People who walk the city** - think about the people that are out in the city every day. These are your bus drivers, landscapers, service people, contractors, postal workers, police officers, bike couriers, cab drivers...these are all people who pay a lot of attention to what happens in the city.

Example:

- Are your neighbor's having their roof done? Go over with cookies, hand out flyers to the roofers, and ask for their help.



- **Police officers** - just going to a police station and handing out a flyer does not mean they will give them to all of their police officers. Every time you see a police car, pull over, and give them a flyer.
- **Consider high traffic areas like grocery stores** - ask the manager if you can set up a table in the parking lot and hand out flyers. Most people will agree as it is for a good cause. This is an excellent way to hit a LOT of people quickly.
- **Translate the flyers into Spanish** - google translate will do this for you for free. Pass these out in Hispanic neighborhoods.
- **Pick major prominent intersections in the city.** For these - go buy NEON pink, yellow, green HUGE poster boards. Tape your smaller poster prominently in the middle. Then write in STOLEN DOG and REWARD on the poster. Put these in intersections and make sure they are on the poles where people will be looking when they are stopped.
- **Monitor craigslist** - all over. Not just in your local community.

Step 4: Safety

- **When entering rough neighborhoods:**
 - Dress the part - don't look like you stand out. Jeans and a black tank top will suffice. No (or little) jewelry.
 - Do not wear a purse or if you do, wear one that slings around - cross body.
 - Carry mace or a knife that is easily accessible. It doesn't hurt to have a baseball bat in the car
 - Walk confidently. Remember - you have a purity of purpose for being there. You aren't messing with people's business. For the most part - when people realize what your flyer says, they'll leave you alone.
 - Carry your tape and flyers in your hand.
 - If you have a friend with - have them drive so you can jump out quickly to post a flyer. Tape in the car, jump out, post, keep moving.
 - If you have a street team of people - park in a busy area. Take dogs with you - walk the streets and hand out flyers, post them up. Cover the busy, high-traffic sections.



- For social media - be very careful the pictures you share, as well as the information. No addresses and no pictures of Rover sitting under a 52" flat screen TV.
- If people call and try to get you to meet them somewhere saying "We have your dog - bring the money" - be very careful. Meet in a public place. Bring friends and/or police. Don't go at night. Bring mace. Never, ever go alone.

A note on rewards:

Offering a reward is a tricky business. You don't want to imply that you are carrying large amounts of money on you - yet you want to motivate people into giving up information. We never posted a reward. But - in person - if someone asked us directly - we would say \$500. It was a believable amount and enough to catch people's interest. If we had said \$3,000 - nobody on the streets would have believed that we would pay them that.

- **Beginning a social media campaign:**

- **Use Facebook, Twitter and email.**
- **Create a public Facebook page**
 - Name it something that evokes emotion - DOG STOLEN - FIDO NEEDS HELP -something to that effect.
 - Share where you have been flyering
 - Encourage people to share the JPEG of your poster. These are easily shared and tweeted and can be sent through hundreds of people very quickly.
 - Don't just do this once. Do it every day. Ask for help - over and over.
 - Share your emotions. Do not get angry. Simply talk about how upset, scared, tired, etc. that you are. This gets people involved in your STORY.
 - Finding a dog is about creating a movement. To do so - you need to put yourself out there. That means you include people in your pain, your trials, and how hard you are working. This is hard to do but Facebook makes it so much easier. People will follow you but you have to be consistent with your posts and make it emotional.



- **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT:** When a business or a high profile page shares your picture or status - go back on your public Facebook page and thank them publicly. Example: And a HUGE thanks to Hal's Harley Davidson for sharing our dog in their newsletter!! Why do you do this? Because it makes other people want to get on board. If they see restaurants and other people sharing it - they will want to be a part of it. Everyone wants to be a part of helping - especially when they see others doing it.

- **Post pictures of your dog**
 - Do not post pictures that show how many nice things you have in your house - your pup sitting under a 52" Flat Screen TV is just asking for people to break into your house.
 - Don't post pictures of you.
 - Post easily identifiable pictures of the dog - especially ones that make people go "awwwwww."
 - Tell stories with the pictures.
 - Ask for help.

Step 5: Contact the Animal People

- Call MADACC (or your area domestic control) every day. Not just once. Every day. Why? They get hundreds upon thousands of dogs. They do not always categorize the dogs properly. They may call a lab a pit bull if it looks like one. Even better? Go there, introduce yourself, and hand them a flyer.
- Shelters will scan the dog for microchips. If your dog is not microchipped, you need to call shelters and offer to email them the flyer.
- There are lists of vets. Sit down and call each one and offer to email or fax a flyer.
- Touch base with your list weekly. Ask friends to help.
- Some vets do not have fax/email - so MAIL them a flyer. This is key. In a bi-lingual neighborhood? Mail them in Spanish and English.
- Google animal rescues near you - make a list - get volunteers to call them.
- For every place that you call - offer to email them a JPEG/PDF of the poster for them to print or share.



Step 6: Alert the local media

- List the facts, as you know them.
- Be professional in your approach.
- Explain why this is a story that is newsworthy.
- All radio stations and news channels do have contact numbers on their websites.
- Radio is good - there are many stations that have options such as "daily dog, etc." where listeners can send their animals in.
- **There is no guaranty that they will pick up the story - but you don't know if you don't try.**
- **If they can't share it in a news story - ask for them to post it on their website's blogs, DJ Facebook's etc. There are other ways around getting this on the air.**

Step 7. Don't Give Up - How to stay committed.

- Consider this a job. You have now launched a campaign. This is a media campaign, as well as, a cause.
- If you stop - other people will to. You are the leader. If you give up and go home - everyone else will too.
- Repetition is key. You must "touch" people OVER AND OVER before they do anything. People need to see the flyers, see it on social media, and have friends talk about it before they choose to get involved.
- This is a lot of work - do not be discouraged. Persistence will pay off.
- It can be completely exhausting and emotionally draining to do this on your own. But do not give up. Recruit help.
- If your friends and family won't help - then find other help. Some of your biggest advocates may be people you have never met before. Contact local rescues and ask for help.
- Ask for help OVER AND OVER.
- The more people who get involved, the stronger you will feel.



- If this grows big - you will get a LOT of opinions - especially on your Facebook page. Be calm and handle the comments professionally. Not everyone has great advice or is willing to support. Do not let them get to you.
- Constant phone calls are tough. Learn to trust your gut on who is just messing with you because they want a reward and who truly has information. Many people will be scared to call because they think that you will turn them in. Others will be calling to just get the money. Be smart.
- Have patience - it may seem like forever - but you can do this.

