



# StubbyDog™

## Rediscover the Pit Bull.

### **Media Matters for Shelters and Rescues Lesson Three: Capturing the Perfect Pit Bull Photograph**

Many adopters are searching for their next pet online, so having wonderful photographs of your adoptable pets isn't something to take lightly. It's the key to capturing an adopter's eye and drawing them in to read a story, make a donation and, hopefully, adopt that pet.

Unflattering photographs don't just hurt the chances of a particular dog getting adopted; they also convey negative images about the breed. Taking your time to get flattering, soft and positive images will pay off for all the pit bulls in your shelter. Never use photos of pit bulls pulling on their leash or straining at their collars. Stay away from photos that make dogs look tense or hyper focused. And delete photos that accidentally show dogs baring their teeth or looking wild eyed.



Not sure how to capture the pit bull spirit that we all love in a still image? Follow these easy tips from professional photographer and pit bull lover, Alekandra G:

**1) Turn off your flash:** Nothing ruins a photo faster than ghoulish green eyes or a super bright photo of a startled-looking dog. The simple solution is to turn off your flash!

For those of you who need technical support, here are some camera tips: Turning off the flash on a more advanced camera, like a DSLR, is simple. If you are operating a point-and-shoot, it could be trickier, so pull out

your manual and figure out how to navigate the menu to deactivate the flash. If your camera doesn't automatically bump up the film speed when you turn off the flash, see if you can change the ISO (aka film speed) to a higher number, like 800 or 1600. Test out the new settings with a single photo – if the photo isn't blurry, you're good to go.

**2) Use Natural Light:** If you are outside, find a nice shady spot. Even though our instinct is to put the subject right in the sun, remember that soft light is always more flattering. The best light is often found under the awning of a building or in an exterior doorway. Cloudy days, mornings or evenings are also a good time for outdoor photography. If the photo comes out blurry, your location is too dark. If you're stuck taking photos on a sunny day, try standing with your back to the sun, then moving a step to the side, so the sun shines over your shoulder on to your subject.



If you're inside, position the dog next to a bright window so that the window is at the dog's side, lighting the side or front of his face. If you can't get near natural light, try placing something bright, like a big white sheet behind or next to them.

**3) Check your background:** Look for good photo locations like a grassy field, a clean bed, or a brick wall. Try to avoid chain-link fences, messy offices or capturing the feet of the person holding the leash. In a pinch, hang a pretty but simple sheet on a wall, and photograph the dogs in front of it.

**4) Grab tasty treats and a partner:** What's better than a single good photo? A collection of them! Aim for a full-body shot, a profile or action shot and a headshot to give adopters a real sense of the physical size and

personality of your dogs. For terrific head shots, get your camera ready in your right hand and then wave a treat (or favorite toy) in front of the dog using your left hand. Raise the treat up to camera level and snap the photo. The goal is for the dog to follow the treat with her gaze so that the moment you take the photo, the dog's eye contact is almost directly with the camera. If you're having trouble by yourself, enlist a helper to handle the toy/treats or hold the leash.

**5) Get Creative:** One favorite look for dog portraiture is the top-down angle, where the photographer simply stands up straight and takes the dog's photo from above. You can also try crouching way down and taking one from a worm's-eye view. Ask the dog to lie down, sit, stand or do any cute tricks she knows and offer her a ball to chew on or a toy to play with to liven up the photo.



Now that you have all these great photos, be sure to share them online. You can even print them out, laminate them and hang them on the front of that dog's kennel, too!

*All photos by Aleksandra G*