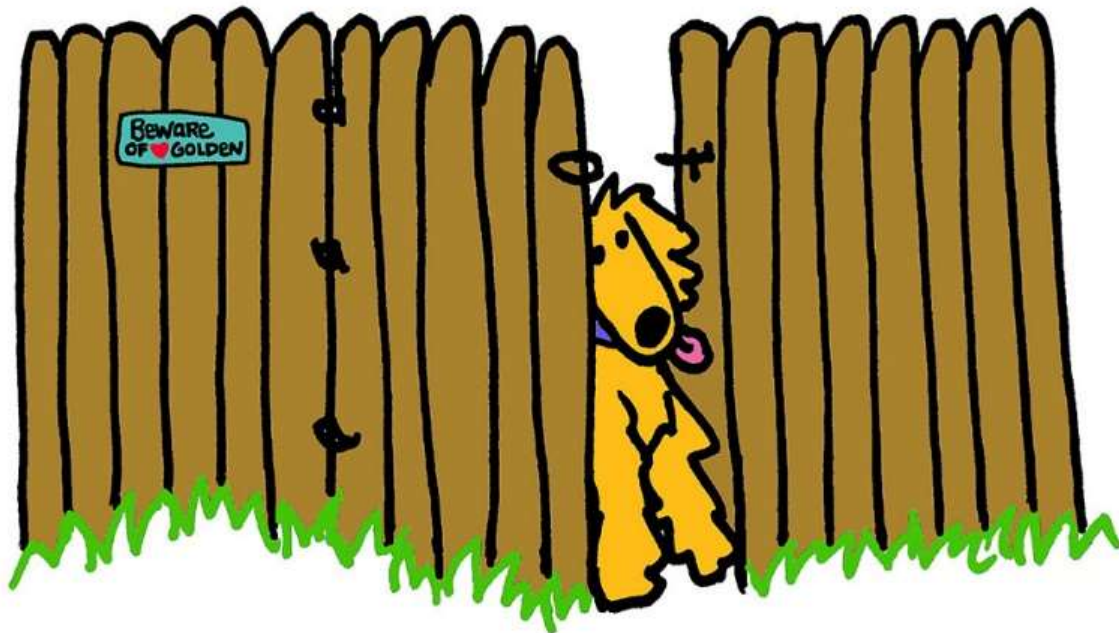




FINDING YOUR LOST GOLDEN: PREPARE, PREVENT, SEARCH & REUNITE

Despite our best efforts as dog owners, sometimes our furry friends get away from us. You may have watched your golden bolt away from you into the woods after a deer. Maybe your dog ran out the front door when you opened it for a delivery. Did your golden sneak out a fence gate that had been left open by mistake? Or did your golden follow a scent off trail on a recent hike?



It is a helpless feeling to know your dog is missing and easy to go into panic mode. What should you do? First, take a deep breath. According to multiple sources, about 93% of lost dogs reunite with their owners using various search methods, and the median recovery time for lost dogs is two days.

Based on information and experiences from experts in lost dog recovery, we recommend that owners take a three-pronged approach, two of which can be done before the dog is lost.

1. **Prepare** – set your golden up for success;
2. **Prevent** – follow expert advice on steps you can take ahead of time to prevent your golden from being lost; and
3. **Search and Reunite** – create a search and recovery plan based on effective practices.

PREPARE: SETTING YOUR GOLDEN UP FOR SUCCESS

1. Keep Legible Identification Tags on Collar/Harness.

Identification Tag on Collar/Harness:

Every dog should have identification on its collar/harness that includes the owner's name, address and phone number, and the dog's name. This ID may be a tag hanging from the collar, a tag imbedded in the collar/harness or even ID information sewn into the collar/harness. If you use an ID tag, check it frequently to make sure the information on the tag is legible. You can purchase tags from many sources including local pet stores and online companies. Tags are made of many materials including aluminum, steel, and silicon. The main question is whether you can read the information on your golden's ID tag. If not, any person who finds your golden will not be able to read the information either. Check your dog's collar/harness regularly to ensure a correct fit, normal wear, and legible ID information. Owners can check the ID info legibility regularly in conjunction with giving their dog monthly preventatives.



Some adopters remove their dogs' collars/harnesses when they are inside the home. Make sure you are diligent about putting the collar/harness with ID information back on your golden anytime he goes outside, even if it is for a brief time. If your golden has two or more collars/harnesses, keep ID information on all of them.

AGK Tag on Collar/Harness:

Adopters also should keep an AGK ID tag on their dog's collar/harness. This tag includes AGK's name and phone number and the phrase "Microchipped." When people find an AGK dog, their first call often is to the phone number on the AGK ID tag. This call is the easiest one for a finder to make because they do not have to take the dog somewhere to be scanned for a microchip. The AGK phone number is monitored 24/7, and someone will call the finder back and get the information about the dog immediately. If we

cannot identify or locate the dog's adopter quickly, we will take steps to secure the dog in a safe place until we can locate its owner. This system helps keep AGK dogs out of shelters unnecessarily and helps return them home quickly. Contact AGK if you need a replacement AGK tag: info@adoptagoldenknoxville.org.



Microchip ID Tag:

Some AGK dogs also have a microchip tag. If your golden has a microchip tag, it should be on his collar/harness as well. The finder can call the microchip company, give them that microchip number, and the company will contact AGK immediately who will reach out to the dog's owner.

2. Retain Important Dog Records & Photos in an Easily Accessible Location

Microchip Number/Company:

All dogs adopted from AGK are microchipped and registered to the rescue for the lifetime of the dog. This policy provides an extra security feature for finding a lost dog because our contact info does not change. When microchips are registered to adopters, sometimes they forget to update the registration with new phone numbers and email/physical addresses. AGK always will contact the adopter as soon as we receive a phone call or email from a microchip company about their lost dog. **Be sure AGK has your current contact info – name, phone number, email address, physical address.** Send any updates to info@adoptagoldenknoxville.org.

Keep your dog's microchip number and company name where it is easy to access. This information should be in the adoption packet provided by AGK and on the adoption contract, but if you do not have the number and company, we can send it to you. Also, any vet or shelter can scan your dog and give you the microchip number and company. If your dog is lost, AGK can make a lost dog report to the microchip company, but the owner also can make a lost dog report if they have the microchip number. AGK does need to be notified that an AGK dog is lost even if the adopter reports it as lost to the microchip company.

You should also ask your vet to scan your dog's microchip at its annual visit. Although extremely rare, microchips can stop working or fall out and not be found on a scan. Checking to make sure the microchip is found each year at your annual visit is good insurance. If no chip is found, your dog will need to be microchipped again; please let AGK know if you put a new microchip in your golden.

Current Photo of Your Dog along with Weight and Age:

Keep a current color photo of your golden handy along with his current weight and age and any unique physical characteristics that could identify him. This information will be important for flyers, posters, and microchip company lost dog reports if needed.



3. Evaluate the Pros and Cons of Using a GPS System with your Dog.

Some adopters use pet collar tracking devices with their dogs as one tool in lost pet prevention and recovery, particularly if their dog is known to bolt and go on adventures. These systems vary in features such as communication method (satellite, cellular, Bluetooth), range of coverage, battery life, size, and cost. Some work better in urban areas and others are designed for use in rural areas. In some cases, these devices also measure the activity and fitness levels of your dog. We recommend that if you are considering purchasing one of these systems, you talk to other pet owners who use them, your vet, and consult product reviews. If you do purchase a device, be sure to do a couple of test runs of your system before you need it – you do not want to be figuring out how to use it while your golden heads into the woods after a deer!

You can find reviews of tracking systems/tags online. Many new products have come on the market in the last couple of years. Not every dog owner will use a tracker on their dog. However, if you are considering purchasing a tag or GPS tracker, online reviews will provide a basic understanding of options and pros and cons.

4. Train Your Dog to Follow Key Commands Including a Conditioned Recall Response

Use positive reinforcement training to train your dog in key commands that will encourage him to listen to you during a stressful or dangerous situation – ex: Sit, Stay, Leave It, Come, Place, Wait or Emergency Stop. Karin TarQwyn, a recognized missing dog expert, recommends training your dog to respond to a “conditioned recall response” that is associated with something positive in the dog’s memory, because many lost dogs are not likely to respond to basic commands when they are panicked, injured, or separated from their pack. ([How to Find a Lost Dog, K. TarQwyn, pp. 157-158](#)). To find a positive reinforcement trainer in your area, google the Karen Pryor Academy Certified Training Partner program, the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers, or the Academy for Dog Trainers.

PREVENT: TAKING STEPS TO PREVENT YOUR GOLDEN FROM BEING LOST

The best way to find a lost dog is to keep it from getting lost in the first place! Some preventative measures you might consider:

1. Develop a Plan for Thunderstorms & Fireworks.

Golden retrievers are notoriously terrified of thunderstorms and fireworks. Some golden retrievers manage their fears by hiding in a closet, tub, shower or under a table or bed where they can hear the least amount of noise. Other goldens bolt in fear – dig



out or jump fences, bust out windows. Observe your dog in these situations while you are home and plan for those times when you are away. Coping strategies include playing soft, calming music, using a sound machine or fan, closing curtains and blinds, and evaluating the many calming products on the market. Train your dog to go to a safe place in your home when they are afraid. You can also talk to your vet about medication to use in times of high stress. If possible, you or a

family member should consider staying with your dog when fireworks or thunderstorms are expected. Should your dog need to go outside to potty during a thunderstorm or fireworks, take them on a leash or harness, even if you have a fenced-in yard.

2. Do Not Use Retractable Leashes.

Despite their popularity among some dog owners, retractable leashes should not be used with your golden. The plastic handle can pop out of your hand if your golden pulls hard on the leash, causing the dog to bolt even faster out of fear hearing the leash bouncing on the ground or pavement behind him. Also, the cord can break or become wrapped around your legs and hands causing significant injury. In addition, a retractable leash gives you no control over your golden if an aggressive dog or other danger is headed your way. A retractable leash also rewards pulling. Karin TarQwyn says that “The most common leash to create a disaster is a retractable leash. More dogs go missing due to the malfunction or an emergency created by this form of leash. I do not recommend the use of a retractable leash at any time for any reason” ([How to Find a Lost Dog](#), pg. 157). For more information on why you should not use retractable leashes, go to <https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/lifestyle/are-retractable-dog-leashes-bad/>.

3. Check Your Physical Fence Regularly for Needed Maintenance.

Check your latch on your fence gate regularly and make sure it is secure. Inspect your fence to ensure no boards are missing or rotten and make sure that your golden cannot dig out.

4. If Your Dog Is a Flight Risk, Do Not Open the Door Unless He is in a Secure Location.

Some dogs are opportunists and explorers. They will take every chance they can to explore the world around them – which means that an open door is simply irresistible. They will dart around you or through your legs to take off to the world of amazing scents and new things to see. Most of the time, these dogs are not aware of the dangers in their adventures. If this is your dog, do not open the door unless the dog is secure in another room, on a leash, or in his crate. Otherwise, you will be looking for him.

5. If Your Dog is a Fence Jumper

Furry escape artists who jump or climb over a fence present some unique challenges. Addressing this issue may require multiple approaches. Some solutions take a while to work – planting trees or bushes a few feet inside the fence and planting vines to cover the fence. You can install coyote rolls on top of your fence and remove any “jumping aids” like garbage cans and wood piles from the yard. It is possible that a fence jumper has pent up mental and physical energy; in that case, training and exercising them regularly before you let them in the yard can help. You may need to stay in the yard while your dog is out and reward them for staying in the fence. Another option is to make the yard a place they want to be – hide treats around the yard (vary the locations for them to find), give them puzzle toys and KONGs in the yard, and for great fun, plant some interesting scents that you can purchase from places like Amazon. Fox and coyote pee are usually attention grabbers.

SEARCH & REUNITE: BRINGING YOUR GOLDEN HOME

Dog Behavior Basics

Every dog is unique in how it responds to people, other dogs and animals, stress, loud noise, and other stimuli. General knowledge of dog behavior may help you find your dog when he is



lost. Did you know that a dog has a highly developed sense of smell - an estimated 300 million scent receptors compared to humans who have only around five million? This incredible sense of smell can help your dog find you as he targets your worn clothing, his bedding and toys, and high value, smelly treats or items that belong to other pets in your home. Also, lost dogs normally will stay within a one-to-two-mile radius of where they initially were lost for a few days, then expand that radius with time. Knowing this typical

behavior gives you an idea of where to focus the initial search for your dog. Lost dogs often hunker down during the day when there is activity, especially if it is hot, and move during the night or early morning. This knowledge gives you clues on the best times to look for your dog. Most dogs can go without water for about 24 hours but without food for five days so you might assume that your dog will be somewhere he has access to water. Also, many dogs will approach other dogs more quickly than humans, so your dog's furry sibling or friend may help you find him

A key component to finding your lost golden is understanding its personality. Some dogs are well socialized and confident. They generally will approach strangers readily and react calmly to most situations. Other goldens have many fears and can be described as skittish, and shy and may respond through freeze, flight, or fight to people searching for them. These fearful dogs tend to be timid and aloof and roam, wander, and hide. The search strategy for these two types of personalities should be tailored to their needs because they likely will respond differently to steps taken in the search process.

Before You Start Searching

Unless you saw your golden bolt away, check every hiding place in your house or property before initiating a neighborhood search. Some "lost" dogs have been found behind a closed door in the house or in a storage shed. Others have been stuck in a crawl space or under a porch and did not respond to their names. Crazy things happen!

Once you know your golden is missing, take a moment to figure out how he got out of your yard or home. Did he dig under a fence corner or stroll through a gate left open by mistake? Did he squeeze by you when you opened the door during neighborhood fireworks? Answers to these questions may give you an idea of the direction he went.

If your dog was wearing a tracking device, check and see if it is working, and if so, follow the tracker. If the device is not working, contact the company and begin your search.

The Search

First Steps:

1. Contact Adopt a Golden Knoxville. The first condition in the adoption contract signed by all adopters relates to a lost golden: *ADOPTER agrees to immediately notify AGK if the Dog is lost or stolen, and to make all reasonable efforts to find the dog.*

You can call AGK at 865-940-0688 and leave a message, call or email any Board member or volunteer, or email AGK at info@adoptagoldenknoxville.org. Someone from the Lost Dog Recovery Team will reach out to you immediately and help plan a search strategy.

2. If you have any reason to believe that your dog has been stolen, contact law enforcement immediately.

3. Notify your neighbors that your dog is missing via your normal neighborhood communication methods. Do a quick search for your dog in your immediate neighborhood (two-mile radius from your home) with friends and family members if possible. Take a current photo of your dog with you as well as a flashlight, whistle, high value treats, extra leash, and a doggy sibling or friend. Talk with your neighbors about what happened, show them your dog's photo, and ask for permission to search their property. Use the flashlight to search under bushes, cars, deck, outbuildings, crawl spaces and window wells; encourage doggy companions to bark; blow the whistle and call your dog's name. Should your golden's collar be caught on something or if he is behind a closed fence or trapped somewhere,



hopefully he will hear you and respond. Leave your phone number/email address in case of a sighting. Ask neighbors if anything occurred that might have caused your

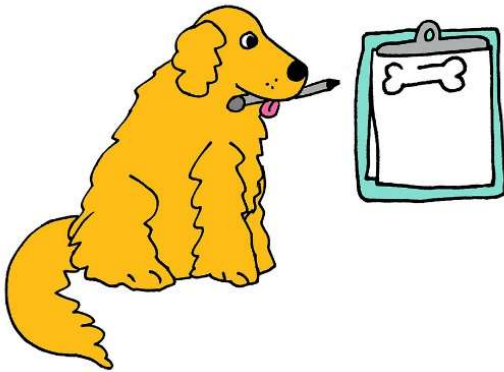
dog to flee such as fireworks, loud construction, or gunshots. Also ask neighbors to monitor their ring doorbell cameras and other security cameras for any sightings of your golden.

4. Designate a friend or family member to stay at your home in case your dog comes back, or someone reads the address on his ID tag and brings him home.

If you do not find your dog within two hours, it is time to regroup and do a more targeted search.

Targeted Search

1. Summarize All Known Info on Situation



Briefly summarize all the info about your golden's escape while it is still fresh on your mind. You will use this info to report your dog as lost to the microchip company, to create flyers and posters, to request help finding your dog on social media sites, and to give the search team the context for understanding how your golden was lost, his personality, and other valuable information.

- Dog's name, age, weight, breed, current color photo
- Microchipped? Need company name and chip number.
- Date & location your dog was last seen – address/intersection.
- Wearing a collar or harness? If so, what type and color? Any ID/tags on collar/harness?
- Leash attached? If so, what color?
- Circumstances of escape (ex: jumped fence, bolted after cat, gate left open on fence, opened door for package delivery and dog ran out)
- Any key details – ex: does not hear or see well, aggressive with other dogs, friendly, skittish, loves kids, loves treats, has medical condition and/or on daily meds.

2. Report your golden as missing to the microchip company.

AGK is happy to make this report for you, but you also can report the dog as lost if you have the microchip number.

3. Report your golden as lost to your local animal shelter.

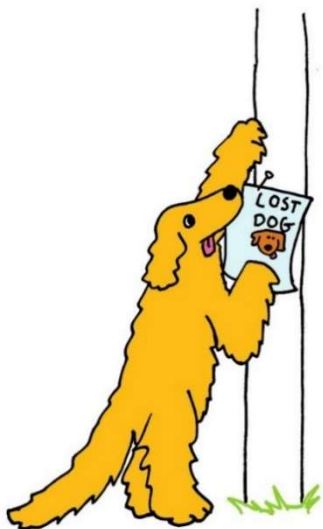
You may be able to make this report by phone, but some shelters require you to file a lost dog report in person. Check your shelter every day for your dog.

4. Use social media to ask for help finding your golden.

Post your dog's flyer on Facebook (public post), neighborhood or community groups in the area, Nextdoor, PawBoost, and lost dog sites. If you live in Knoxville, post the lost dog information on these Facebook pages: LOST and FOUND Pets of East TN; Knoxville Area Lost & Found Pet Site; Knoxville Lost & Found Pets; and Knoxville Lost & Found Pets 2. Ask friends and volunteers to share your posts. Also, monitor any Message Requests on Facebook as someone you are not friends with may be sending you information about your golden.



5. Create lost dog flyers and posters ASAP!



Since many people do not use Facebook or other social media, it is critical to begin distribution of flyers and posters as soon as possible with a two-mile radius of where your golden was last seen. The sooner you know where he is, the quicker you can bring him home. Flyers should include basic details and be given to anyone you see – neighbors, delivery people, postal workers, walkers and runners, and area businesses including restaurants.

Posters should be larger than flyers and include critical dog info in bold type that can be seen from a distance. You can create a poster on 8 ½" paper, put it in a protective sleeve or laminate it, and attach it to a half sheet neon poster board. Both flyers and posters should include a recent color photo of your golden. Posters should be put up at all

major intersections in the area (make notes where you put them for quick clean up when your dog is found.) You can also put a poster in your front yard. For more ideas on

creating flyers and posters, go to <https://www.missinganimalresponse.com/neon-posters/>.

Important: Always include this statement on the flyer and poster: “Do not chase – call with sightings” and include the names and phone numbers of people to contact who know the dog best (owner, foster, trained search team member). It is critical NOT to chase or yell at a dog on the run as it can put a dog at risk of being injured by vehicles and force the dog from the area where they felt safe. Monitor the contact phone numbers on the flyer and poster. Keep cell phones charged and close by.

6. Assemble a search team.

These are the people who will do the groundwork – passing out flyers, putting up posters, talking to people in the area, searching the neighborhood, and keeping a record of the date and time of all sightings. If you live in the Knoxville area, the AGK Lost Dog Recovery Team AGK will help.

Next Steps – Sightings



Saturate the last area where your golden was seen with flyers and posters using a two-mile radius as a guide. Follow up on any sightings, even if it turns out not to be your dog. Take scent articles (your worn clothing, your dog’s favorite toy or blanket, articles with the scent of any other animals you may have – even their poop!) to any location where your dog has been sighted and leave it with treats. Check these locations every 6-12 hours. You can also leave scent articles from you and your other pets around your home. Hopefully, your dog will be waiting for you at one of those checks. Always update scent articles after a rain. Ask people in the area to monitor their doorbell and security cameras for any sightings of your golden.

When You Know Where Your Dog Is Hanging Out

Once you have an idea of the area where your dog is located, your next steps really depend on his nature. Is your dog friendly to people and other dogs or is he shy and skittish? Will your dog respond to the “Come” command or more likely retreat from sound and people he does not know? Make frequent walks to the area where your golden has been seen and bring high value treats, squeaky toys, scent items and any doggy friends he might like. Call your dog’s name and encourage the doggy friend to bark. If you do see your golden, sit on the ground, and let him come to you – do not walk towards him – but toss high value treats toward him.

When It Is Time for a Search Strategy Change

If your golden moves to another geographic area or stays in the area but does not respond to your best efforts to find him, it may be time to try other approaches – such as setting up feeding stations and/or traps, consulting a professional dog tracker, searching via drone. AGK will share ideas and resources with you as the search continues. We have an experienced Lost Dog Recovery Team and contacts with professional trackers, a thermal drone operator and search dog teams if needed.

Should You Offer a Reward?

Whether to offer a reward for finding your dog is a personal decision. However, most experts recommend that you do not offer a reward. Why? A reward can encourage people chase your dog to get the reward which can cause him to travel even farther away from you. Rewards also encourage scammers to contact you.

Scammers

Unfortunately, searching for lost dogs is not immune from the unscrupulous people who prey on emotions to make money. Do not be surprised to get texts and messages once your dog is posted on social media and flyers and posters are distributed. These people may say they have found your dog or offer guaranteed search results for a fee. Be skeptical and cautious.

Once Your Dog is Home

Be sure and follow up and let people know the good news that your golden is safe. Post updates on social media, Nextdoor, PawBoost, lost dog sites, and your neighborhood communication groups. Also notify the microchip company and local shelter that your golden has been found. Remove all posters that were put up. Give your golden lots of welcome home hugs!

