



# ASSEMBLY RESOURCE

for 5-12 year olds



[www.LearnWithDogsTrust.ie](http://www.LearnWithDogsTrust.ie)

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# Introduction

Welcome to your Assembly resource booklet from Dogs Trust. This booklet is suitable for pupils from First Class to Sixth Class, and, with modification, for Junior and Senior Infants. Inside, you will find five story-based assemblies each with a theme that will help children to reflect on an important issue:

- Welcoming someone new
- Working together
- Bullying
- Saying you're sorry
- Saying goodbye

At the end of each story the children are encouraged to reflect upon the theme of the story in order to consider their reaction to the outcome, and compare with instances in their own lives. The stories include references to dog behaviour and responsible dog ownership.

The stories support Language (developing cognitive abilities, emotion and imaginative development) and SPHE (all three strands). The extension ideas can be used to support Drama and Music within the Arts Education curriculum.

Dogs Trust provides free resources and workshops for schools, for information on how to obtain these, or to find out more about Dogs Trust Education Programme, please call 01 879 1827 or visit [www.learnwithdogstrust.ie](http://www.learnwithdogstrust.ie)

## Dogs Trust

At Dogs Trust we are all passionate about ensuring a safe and bright future for our four-legged friends!

Dogs Trust arrived in Ireland in 2005, and is Ireland's largest dog welfare charity. We began our work by way of our hugely successful nationwide Education programme. We now employ an Education & Community Team of 6 who deliver free curriculum linked workshops based around responsible dog ownership throughout Primary Schools in Ireland. Dogs Trust believe that by educating children, we are enabling the next generation of dog owners to make informed decisions on owning a dog in the future.

Building work began on our state of the art rehoming centre in 2008 and we opened our doors in November 2009. We rescue dogs from a variety of sources; working closely with local authority pounds and like-minded animal welfare charities across the country.

We endeavour to provide a range of professional services and materials FREE to teachers and pupils. They are designed to assist teachers in meeting curriculum needs, whilst raising awareness of Dogs Trust and the importance of looking after dogs.

For more information about our FREE resources, please go to the back page.

## Using the stories

The five stories can be used individually, or they can be combined to provide a week of assemblies. Each story considers a different theme but there is a common strand of good dog care running throughout. Why not start by introducing the cast (See text below 'The Cast'). The final story, 'Goodbye', will be most effective if told last.

### Preparation

The stories can be used in any assembly setting but they will work best in an informal environment, for example with the teacher leading the assembly sitting on a chair and the children gathered round in a circle. This brings them into the story more effectively and can encourage reflection. In a class setting, the stories are ideal for use during circle time.


### Props

A visual focus would be useful. You could ask the children to bring in toy dogs, or photographs of their own dogs, and select the five that most closely match the characters. Each character can then be introduced to the assembly and will help the children's imaginations bring the story to life. Support language development by making large cards showing the key words included in each story.

### Music

Music will help to develop the desired atmosphere and focus children's thoughts. Each story has suggestions for popular music that could be played as children enter and leave the assembly, but your school may also have songs that the children can sing after their moment of reflection. Singing is both stimulating and memorable, and the right music or song will greatly enhance their experience of each story.

### Reflection

Time to reflect is an important part of an assembly, and a useful skill to teach children growing up in a busy world. Each story includes 'Paws Points' (marked with a ) which you could use to stop the narrative for a few moments to encourage the children to reflect on key questions in the story. However, if you don't want to interrupt the flow of the narrative, you could raise these points for reflection at the end, having allowed the children to absorb the story for a few moments. If you adopt this latter approach, a quiet piece of music played during the reflection can enhance the mood and help children to focus their thoughts.

### Extension ideas

If time allows, the children could deliver some or all of the assemblies. Each story could be adapted into a simple drama to be acted in front of their school or class. Alternatively, they could read the story themselves and/or lead the reflection. Consider creating a more intimate setting than usual, with the actors or speakers close to their audience. This approach will work particularly well for class or year assemblies, where the audience is small and the performance less likely to be a daunting experience. Follow-up activities can help to reinforce the message behind each story and help children relate the theme to a real-life situation. Activities could include creating a storyboard, concept board or poster for the story, or encouraging children to respond to the reflective questions using a writing frame.

## The Cast

Rex, Rosie, Flick and Muffin are all dogs that live in a rehoming centre. The dogs are in the rehoming centre because their owners did not want them, or could not look after them. In the rehoming centre the dogs are looked after by 'Canine Carers' - people who make sure the dogs receive all of the food, exercise and love that they need. Rex, Rosie, Flick and Muffin's owners did not realise that owning a dog is a big responsibility, as dogs need lots of love, exercise and food every day for up to fifteen years. It can also be expensive to buy dog food and pay for the vet when the dog is poorly. If people get a dog without thinking it through carefully then they might not look after the dog properly and sometimes the dog ends up mistreated or abandoned like the dogs in our story.

All of the dogs in the stories are crossbreeds. Rex is the biggest and strongest dog in the group. He is very friendly, but not always very bright, and he dribbles a lot. Rosie has a beautiful coat, and is active and clever. Flick is the leader of the four friends. He loves chocolate drops and playing ball. Muffin is a very gentle dog. After a run around, she likes nothing better than a long snooze. Rex and the others play together, but they also know when to leave each other alone. In the first story they are joined by Zippy, a small brown and white puppy.

## A new face

One day, Rex, Rosie, Flick and Muffin woke up to find a new bed had been placed in the corner overnight. Inside, underneath a blanket, a new dog was sleeping. 'I think we've got company,' said Flick. 'I wonder who's under there?' Rex wagged his enormous tail. 'Let's have a look and see!'

'No,' replied Rosie. 'If he arrived in the night he'll be tired. Let's leave him alone. He'll soon wake up when he smells breakfast.'

Muffin stretched. 'I hope it comes soon,' she yawned, 'I'm hungry!' As Muffin spoke, a Canine Carer arrived with five bowls of food and five bowls of water. She put four of each down by the dogs, who began to eat. She put the final bowls down by the new bed and left.

Suddenly, as Rex ate his food, something bit the end of his tail! 'Ouch!' he yelped, and fell forward, landing with his face in his food. Like any dog, Rex didn't like being interrupted whilst he ate, and he was very cross.

'Oi! Oi! Who are you? My name's Zippy because I'm always zipping around!' shouted a voice, as a tiny brown and white puppy ran in circles around Rex. Rex stared down at the tiny dog, as he ran around disturbing the others until they were just as cross. 'I'm Rex, as in leave me alone whilst I eat my breakfast, or I'll eat you too!'

'Ooooooh! Listen to you! Bet you can't catch me!' shouted Zippy, and ran back to his own food.

'Great,' sighed Flick. 'A crazy puppy, with no manners. Just what we need!' The others looked at Zippy in dismay. They weren't sure they liked the idea of someone new either. 🐾 1

As the day wore on, Zippy never ran out of energy. He'd wake them up when they slept, or try to chase them round outside. By dinner time they were all thoroughly fed up with Zippy. They'd not had a moment's peace all day. Finally, as the Carer brought in their evening bowls of food and water, Flick lost his temper with Zippy.

'Get in your corner and eat your food. Don't even think about coming near us, or even talking to us. We're fed up with you, and we don't want you in our group.'

Zippy looked up at Flick. His ears drooped, and his head sank to the ground, and he went slowly to his corner. 🐾 2

The four dogs ate in peace, and all settled down for a nap. There wasn't a sound from Zippy as he lay in his corner, staring at the wall. Flick looked over. He couldn't sleep because he felt bad about getting so cross with Zippy. Rosie was watching Flick, and came over.

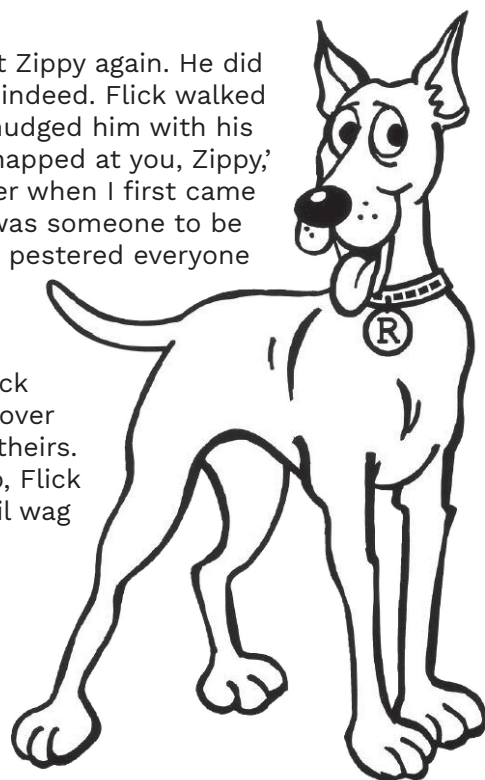
'Can you remember when you first came here?' she asked, quietly.

'Oh yes,' said Flick. 'I was really scared. Everything was strange, and I felt very lonely. I just wanted to make some friends!'

'Well, maybe that's what Zippy was doing. He's only a puppy, after all. He must be very unhappy over there.'

Flick looked over at Zippy again. He did look very unhappy, indeed. Flick walked over to Zippy and nudged him with his nose. 'I'm sorry I snapped at you, Zippy,' he said. 'I remember when I first came here. All I wanted was someone to be friends with. I bet I pestered everyone as well. Come over here with us.'

With Rex's help, Flick pulled Zippy's bed over to where they had theirs. As Zippy fell asleep, Flick watched Zippy's tail wag gently.



### Reflection

🐾 1 Why do you think the dogs might not like sharing with someone new?

🐾 2 How do you think Zippy is feeling? How do you think Flick is feeling?

Think about when you first came to school, or joined a new club or group. How did you feel? How could you become a friend to someone new, and help him or her to feel at home?

When do you think it would be unwise to approach or stroke a dog?

You should always ask the owner's permission before touching a dog, and always leave dogs alone when they are eating, sleeping or tied up.

## Lean on me!

Rex, Rosie, Flick, Muffin and Zippy were playing in the garden of the Rehoming Centre. Like all dogs they needed lots of exercise and they loved to get out of doors to run around and play. The dogs needed different amounts of exercise: Flick, Rex and Rosie would play for a couple of hours whereas Muffin would join in for a while and then have a nap under a tree. But Zippy would run around all day until his legs couldn't carry him any longer!


The five dogs had a red ball that they loved to chase around the garden. Rosie and Flick had learned how to poke their noses under the ball and throw it up into the air, for one of the other dogs to catch. Rosie dug her nose right under the ball, and tossed it high into the air.



'Catch it, Rex!' she shouted, but the ball flew into a tree and stuck between two branches. All the dogs ran under the tree, leaping in the air and barking at the stuck ball: all, that is, except Zippy, who sat to one side and stared at it quietly.

'Now what are we going to do?' asked Muffin, exasperated. 'We've got nothing to play with now.' She began to run in circles under the ball, barking, but stopped, panting, after a while. 'I feel dizzy!' she wheezed.

Rex looked at the tree. 'I've got it!' he announced. 'You know how you're always telling me to use my head? Watch this! I'll shake it out.' And Rex ran straight at the tree as fast as he could, hitting the trunk with his head. The tree shook, sending leaves and twigs falling around them, but the ball didn't move. 'Ow!' cried Rex. 'That really hurt!' Zippy still sat and stared at the red ball.

Rosie looked at Flick. 'I bet one of us could jump high enough to grab it!' she exclaimed. They both began to leap in the air again, but neither of them could leap quite high enough. Eventually they were too tired to leap any more, and fell in a heap on the floor.  1

All the dogs looked at one another. They had all tried to get the ball, but none of them could think of a way that would work. Finally, Zippy spoke. 'We'll never get it down like this. I've got an idea, though. Rex, walk over to the tree, and put your front paws as high up the trunk as you can.'

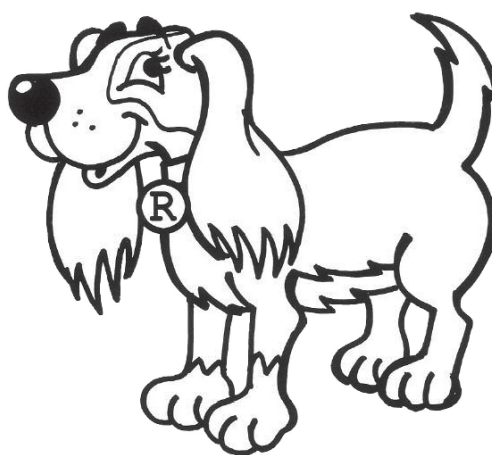
Rex walked over to the tree and reared up on his hind legs, putting his front paws on the trunk so he stayed upright. Zippy walked in a circle around Rex. 'Now Rosie, I want you to get on Rex's shoulders and put your front feet on Rex's head. Rex, can Rosie do that?'

Rex looked down at Zippy. 'Well, yes, but not for too long. My head still hurts!' Rosie ran and gently leapt up Rex's back, balancing on his shoulders. She was nearly as high as the red ball.

'I can't reach it Zippy! It won't work!' But Zippy was already running as fast as he could towards Rex and Rosie. He ran up Rex's back and over Rosie, before leaping into the air and knocking the ball out of the tree. Rex and Rosie tumbled to the ground and Zippy landed right on top of Rex. It was lucky he was such a tiny dog.

'Are you both all right?' asked Zippy. 'Yes,' chorused Rosie and Rex. Flick walked up to Zippy. 'That was a clever idea. Well done!'

'It wasn't just me,' said Zippy. 'I couldn't have done it without Rex and Rosie, after all!' And with that, he was off running around again, after the red ball.



### Reflection



**1** Can you think of a way the dogs could get the ball down safely?

Can you think of something you have done completely on your own, without anyone's help at all? Often we think we have done something on our own, but others have helped us even if we don't realise it. Maybe they taught us something, or made the tools we used, but someone else will always have helped.

Think about something you have achieved by working with others at home or at school. How could you help other people?



# That's my bowl!

It was evening and a Canine Carer brought dinner round for all of the dogs. Flick, Rosie, Zippy and Muffin tucked into their food, but Rex was very quiet for a change. 'I'm, er going to eat around the corner,' he said, nervously. Flick looked up. 'Are you alright, Rex?' he asked turning his head on one side. 'Um, yes,' replied Rex. 'I'm fine, honestly. I just fancy a change, that's all.'

Flick was hungry, and began to eat again. 'OK. See you!' he mumbled, his mouth full of food. The other dogs were too busy gobbling up their food to notice. Rex came back later on, holding his bowl in his mouth before dropping it in its usual place. 'Hello, where've you been?' asked Zippy, looking up at Rex. 'Nowhere!' blurted Rex quickly. 'I'm tired!' he added. 'Goodnight!' With that, Rex curled up in his basket, facing the wall, leaving Flick wondering what was wrong: he'd never known Rex to eat apart from the rest of them before.

At breakfast, Rex moved his bowl around the corner again. Flick watched as Rex slipped away. He came back before the others had finished, and Flick was sure that Rex was staring hungrily at their bowls as they all licked them clean. That day, Rex seemed quiet, dozing under the tree instead of playing with the others as usual. Zippy watched him for a while before running over. 'Come and play!' yapped Zippy. 'It's a lovely day - make the most of it!'



'Leave me alone!' Rex snapped, and pushed Zippy away with his paw. Confused and hurt by Rex's unfriendly behaviour, Zippy ran off and went to find Flick. **paw 1**

Flick hadn't seen what had happened between Rex and Zippy, and he listened with interest to Zippy's account. 'Zippy, can you keep a secret?' he asked when Zippy had finished. Zippy nodded, solemnly. 'Rex has been acting strangely since that new dog, Biff, arrived at the Centre last week. I think that there is something going on between them, and I think we should find out what it is. If Rex takes his bowl around the corner at dinner time, try to see where he goes - but don't get caught!'

That evening, Rex slipped away with his bowl once more. Ever so quietly, Zippy crept along behind him and peered around the corner. Down the corridor,

Rex was with Biff - emptying the food from his bowl into Biff's! Zippy ran back quickly and told Flick what he had seen. 'He must be starving!' exclaimed Zippy. Flick agreed. 'We can sort that out easily enough' he said. He called the other dogs around him and spoke quietly for a while. Each of them left some food in their bowl that evening.

When Rex returned later on, he couldn't take his eyes off the left over food! 'I think they gave us too much tonight,' said Zippy. 'Want a bit more?' added Flick. A huge smile filled Rex's face.

'Yes please!' he barked. After Rex had eaten (which didn't take long), Flick quietly talked to him for a while. Rex looked at the floor as he replied to Flick's questions, but eventually raised his head again, and seemed much happier when they had finished talking.

Flick called the others over. 'Rex has had a spot of bother with Biff. It seems Biff's a bit keen to be in charge here, and decided he ought to try to show Rex who's boss, since Rex's so big. He threatened Rex with all sorts of things to make Rex give him his food each dinner time, but I think we can show Biff that he can't pick on Rex like that.' With that, Flick gathered the dogs around him to tell them his plan. **paw 2**

The next morning Rex ate breakfast with his friends. Soon, Biff appeared. 'Where's my food?' he growled, menacingly.

'It'll be by your basket, where the Carer left it,' replied Rex, placidly. Biff moved towards Rex's bowl, but Flick and the others blocked his path. 'If you pick on me,' said Rex, looking over the others at Biff, 'you pick on my friends as well. We don't tolerate bullying here, so go back and be content with your own food.' The other dogs growled at Biff as Rex spoke, and Biff got the message. Rex's friends weren't going to let him get away with it, and he was no match for the five of them. Biff glared at them and walked away. Rex breathed a sigh of relief. 'Thanks, all of you - now I can enjoy my food again!'

## Reflection

- paw 1** Why do you think that Rex is behaving so oddly?
- paw 2** What would you do?

Rex was right to tell Flick. Who else could he have told? Who should you tell if you are being bullied? What should you tell them?

It's important to stand up to bullies, and to support anyone who is being bullied. Think of what you could do to show that bullying has no place in your school. Like the dogs in the story, how can we stand up to bullies without becoming one ourselves? Who can help?

Sometimes people bully their dogs. Dogs, like people, don't like being treated like this, and cannot understand why their owner is upset with them - they want to please their owner and make them happy. How could you make your dog feel loved?

# The hardest thing to say

**Theme:** Saying you're sorry


**Suggested music:** 'Sorry seems to be the hardest word' (Blue and Elton John)  
'Search for the Hero' (M People)

Rex was asleep under the tree in the garden of the Rehoming Centre. It was a hot day, and he was tired after chasing a ball with Zippy all morning. Zippy, who was full of energy, was still running around in the sun with the ball, but he soon began to get bored of playing alone. Zippy left the ball and went to find Flick, Rosie and Muffin.


They were inside the Rehoming Centre, enjoying the cool shade and having a drink of fresh water.


'Hello Zippy!' called Rosie, 'Come and have a drink - you need one in this hot weather.' Zippy said hello and sat lapping up water from his bowl. 'Come and play with me some more!' he begged, running in circles around the bigger dogs. 'No!' replied Flick. 'We're too hot and tired. We might come back out later when it's cooler. Why don't you have a nap for a while?' But Zippy wasn't interested.

'No way!' he shouted, as he ran back outside. 'You're all sooo booring!'

Maybe Rex would play with him! He ran over to Rex and was about to wake him up when he thought better of it. He knew Rex wouldn't want to be woken up and Zippy didn't want to get bitten by an angry Rex. Then he had a thought: maybe he could play with Rex without waking him up? Zippy ran to one side of Rex, and running as fast as he could, jumped right over Rex. He laughed as he landed: that was great fun! Zippy ran off, and then jumped back over Rex the other way. By now he couldn't stop giggling. He carried on jumping over Rex from one side to the other, trying not to laugh too loudly in case he woke Rex. It just seemed so funny to jump over such a huge sleeping dog! Zippy looked at Rex. Maybe he could jump from one end to the other? He was a fit little dog after all.  **1**

Zippy took the biggest run-up he could, jumped right over Rex's head, over his long back, and landed . . .

. . . right on Rex's back legs! 'Ow!' yelled Zippy and Rex at the same time, but Rex, who didn't know what was happening, turned round growling and nipped Zippy on the leg. 'Ow!' cried Zippy again, louder than before. 'That really hurt!' 'Serves you right, you silly little dog!' growled Rex, cross at being woken up like that. Zippy ran inside, crying, and told the other dogs what had happened. None of them had any sympathy for Zippy. They all thought he should have known better.  **2**

As the day wore on, Zippy and Rex wouldn't have anything to do with one another. Rex growled whenever Zippy was nearby, and Zippy would mutter 'Stupid great misery guts,' whenever Rex was close (but out of earshot). The other dogs began to get fed up with them both. 'Why not just say you're sorry?' Muffin suggested to Zippy. 'No way!' Zippy replied. 'I wouldn't have done it if you'd played with me. It wasn't my fault I got bored. He really hurt my leg!' Rex wouldn't say sorry either. 'I only nipped him because he landed on me. He shouldn't have done it.'  **3**

Neither dog would apologise first: Zippy licked his sore leg, and Rex lay on his bed in a mood. The day was no fun for the other dogs either. Zippy and Rex's moods began to get them down as well, until all the dogs were lying on their beds, not saying a word to one another. Evening came, and they ate their meal in silence before getting back into their beds. It seemed like no-one had spoken for hours.

Eventually, Zippy walked over to Rex. Zippy had been watching the other dogs for a while. It wasn't like them to be like this, and he finally began to realise it might be his fault. 'I'm sorry I jumped on you and woke you up, Rex,' he apologised. 'It was an accident, though.' Rex looked at Zippy. After what seemed like forever, he smiled. 'I'm sorry too. I should have waited to see who it was before I nipped you. But you shouldn't have been jumping on me like that!' Zippy and Rex both sighed with relief. They were both glad to have made up at last.

'Thank goodness for that!' said Flick. 'I thought you were both going to fall asleep angry tonight!'



## Reflection

 **1** What do you think happens next?

 **2** Why do you think Rex bit Zippy?

 **3** Whose fault do you think it was?

Think about a time when you should have said 'sorry', but you didn't. How did you feel? More importantly, how did the other person feel? Next time you do something wrong, say 'sorry' as soon as you can. See how it makes you feel, and how it makes the other person feel as well.

Like you, if dogs are woken up suddenly they can get scared, and lash out. Be careful when you are around dogs and make sure that you don't scare them.

# Goodbye

All the dogs in the rehoming centre were excited. A family had come to see if they wanted to adopt one of them! People often came to look at the dogs and sometimes they would choose one. If they did, a Canine Carer would visit them at home to make sure they could look after the dog, then the family would visit a few more times to see how well they got on with their lucky choice.

Rehoming centres have to be sure that the family have thought very carefully about the responsibilities involved in owning a dog, and what sort of dog would be best for their family, before they will rehome the dog. All the dogs looked forward to having a new home, but they didn't look forward to leaving their friends behind.

Flick, Rosie, Rex, Muffin and Zippy waited until it was their turn. Today's family seemed nice. They looked like the sort of family who knew how to care properly for a dog! One at a time, each dog met the family. They made sure they were on their best behaviour, and tried to look their best. Finally, the family got to Zippy. He was only a puppy and was far more excited than the others. He jumped up and down, wagging his tail, before running round in circles. Both children pointed at Zippy, and shouted 'This one!'

Zippy couldn't believe his ears and became even more excited, but the other dogs were quiet. They had not known Zippy long, but he was their friend, even if he did get too excited sometimes. That afternoon, Zippy ran around even more than usual shouting 'I've got a new family!' The other dogs weren't so playful. They were upset at not being chosen, and they were also sad at losing Zippy.

The next week was hard for all the dogs. Zippy had calmed down a little bit, and he began to talk about what life with his family would be like. 'We'll go for walks every day and they might give me chocolate drops and a new ball!' Flick, Rex, Rosie and Muffin played with Zippy as much as they could, but all his questions made them sadder - after all, they all wanted a family to love too. But they made the most of the rest of the week until the day came for Zippy to go. 🐾 1

The four dogs lined up to say goodbye. Rosie and Muffin cried a little as they said goodbye. Flick put his paw on Zippy's shoulder. 'It was great to have you in the gang!' he said, trying to ignore the lump in his throat. 'I know we got cross with you sometimes,

but I'm really glad we met you!' Rex lowered his head, so he could look Zippy in the eye. 'You deserve your new family - and they deserve you. I hope you're really happy with them.' He looked away quickly so Zippy wouldn't see the tear forming in his eye.

'I'll come to visit!' called Zippy, as he ran off with his new owners, but the dogs knew he wouldn't be able to.

That afternoon, the dogs kept to themselves. Chasing the ball around didn't seem fun anymore, and the place seemed quiet and empty. None of the dogs wanted to play or talk. They each felt as though they had lost something from inside themselves - something they wouldn't find again. They stayed like that, quietly thinking to themselves how sad they were, until Muffin giggled. 'Do you remember when we first met Zippy and he wouldn't let Rex eat his breakfast?'

'Or when he ran up Rex and me to get the ball out of the tree?' said Rosie, beginning to smile. 'I remember when Zippy tried to jump over Rex and landed right on him!' added Flick. 'Rex - remember how cross you got with him?' Rex finally smiled as well. He seemed to have got cross with Zippy more than anyone, but he was also missing him the most. 'Yes, I do,' he said. 'Looking back, it was the funniest thing that's happened for ages. I'm glad we all met Zippy - but I'm glad he found a proper home with a family who will love him and give him treats!'

All the dogs nodded in agreement. They all missed Zippy already, and they knew they would be sad for some time yet. But they were also happy. After all, if they had never met Zippy, they wouldn't have so many happy memories



## Reflection

- 🐾 1 How do you think Zippy feels? How do you think the others feel?
- 🐾 When a friend leaves it is natural to feel sad. But it can also be a time to celebrate.

Think of all the good times you have had because you knew each other - you should always be glad of those times that you shared together. Sometimes, it is only when someone goes that we realise how much we cared for them as a friend. Think of your own friends - do you care enough about them now?





# Additional Information

Dogs Trust provides FREE education workshops about Responsible Dog Ownership, and Safety around dogs, to 95% of primary schools across Ireland. If you are interested in finding out more about the education programme, or would like to see if there is an Education and Community Officer in your area:

**visit:** [www.LearnWithDogsTrust.ie](http://www.LearnWithDogsTrust.ie)  
**call:** 01 879 1827  
**email:** [education@dogstrust.ie](mailto:education@dogstrust.ie)

For more information about the work of Dogs Trust, Ireland's largest Dog Welfare organisation, please visit [www.DogsTrust.ie](http://www.DogsTrust.ie).



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