

# FetchiNg Fido

A GUIDE TO LOCATING YOUR PERFECT PET PAL



By Kyla Duffy

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# INTRODUCTION

This book was inspired by the completely avoidable horror stories I've heard from people who unwittingly bought dogs from disreputable breeders. Their stories, which should have ended happily ever after, unfortunately resulted in them having both their hearts and wallets sunk into a disaster of a dog. Even worse, the financial suffering experienced by these people is trivial compared to the physical suffering of breeding dogs who create these pet shop puppies for unscrupulous breeders.

My first dog came from a breeder. Luckily she turned out to be from a responsible breeder, but we wouldn't have known the difference at the time. We could have just as easily ended up like those unlucky people who simply wanted a new furry friend and ended up broke.

By following the advice presented herein, you're taking a big step toward ensuring that the next person in this awful situation is *not* you! After an indispensable but brief overview

of the dog breeding industry, you'll find information on how to locate and select a rescue or reputable breeder. In each section, I've provided questions and expectations to help guide you as you make decisions about your new family member.

Toward the end of the book, I've included resources for further reading and information on how you can volunteer to help create a better world for our furry best friends.

Nothing brings me more joy in life than volunteering with animal rescue organizations. The formerly distressed dogs I've fostered and adopted have constantly filled my home with wonderment, surprise, and love. In writing this guide, my hope is that I can help you also experience the unique joy our furry friends provide in a way that doesn't cause undue suffering for breeding dogs or you to lose your shirt. —*Kyla Duffy, founder of Happy Tails Books and Up For Pups*



# Section 1

## THE DOG BREEDING INDUSTRY: WHAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

Not all breeders do so responsibly. *Reputable* breeders care about perpetuating a breed and improving breed lineage, period. They breed small quantities of dogs, resting them between cycles, and they stick to just one or two breeds about which they are experts. Working to ensure good health and temperament is of utmost importance to responsible breeders. Additionally, good breeders encourage potential buyers to visit their facility, they require an extensive amount of personal information before passing their puppies along, and they have a comprehensive return policy.

*Backyard* breeders are people who breed dogs at their homes for profit. These people don't have the necessary experience to correctly breed dogs. For example, they do not perform genetic testing, nor do they generally adhere to any standards of care.<sup>1</sup> The breeding dogs are often kept outside or in filthy indoor conditions, and they are seen as a source of income instead

of a family pet. Some backyard breeders have many breeds of dogs stacked in chicken-wire cages in rooms of their homes. Puppies from backyard breeders are often sold online or in the newspaper through classified ads.

*Puppy mills* are like backyard breeders on steroids. They keep many (sometimes thousands of) breeding dogs in cramped outdoor chicken-wire cages that are often stacked on top of one another. Even the floor of the cages is chicken wire so the waste falls through to lower cages, which is why we see many puppy mill survivors with severe eye infections. A tell-tale sign of a mill survivor is splayed toes and disfigured feet.



The millers (puppy mill owners) breed females every cycle (about every six months) and wean puppies way too early (before eight weeks). Dogs are never allowed to exercise or socialize, resulting in ill-tempered, sick puppies and very emotionally and physically distressed parents.

Thousands of puppy mills exist throughout United States, with the largest concentrations of mills in MO, NE, KS, IA, AR, OK, and PA (many puppy mills in the East are run by Amish).<sup>ii</sup> They sell their puppies in pet shops, online, and through newspaper ads under the guise of loving, caring breeding farms. (Don't believe what you read on websites like Craigslist.) They often have fancy websites with delightful names including words like "rolling hills" and "grassy meadows" to make you think the dogs are romping around on a hillside, but that is not the case.

## **The relationship between puppy mills and pet shops**

Studies show that 98% of pet shop puppies come from puppy mills.<sup>iii</sup> The immediate, tangible concern about buying a dog from a pet store is that you've got a good chance of picking up a sick dog. A broader social concern is that by buying a dog

from a pet store, you are perpetuating this cruel puppy mill breeding industry.

Since pet shops are one of the main distribution outlets for the offspring of mistreated puppy mill breeding dogs, buyers are likely to get a puppy who was weaned too early from a parent dog who was sick to begin



**Gracie, an ex-puppy mill breeding dog**

with. The puppy was probably transported in an overcrowded, un-airconditioned truck across many states and was lucky to have survived.<sup>iv</sup> Sometimes buyers can never tell their puppies came from this appalling situation, but often the resulting puppies turn out to be a significant financial drain for their families due to overwhelming vet bills.

Pet shops try to fool buyers into believing their puppies come from reputable breeders by saying things like, “All the

breeders we work with are USDA licensed.” Reputable breeders and rescue organizations would argue that holding a USDA license is actually *indicative* of unscrupulous breeding because the only reason a breeder would have one is if he or she were a large-scale operation (puppy mill) selling to pet shops!<sup>v</sup> Smaller breeders and those selling directly to the public are not required to hold a USDA license.

# Section 2

## DOG RESCUE AND ADOPTION

**M**ost people know they can adopt a homeless dog from a shelter, but many don't realize there are private rescue groups around the country specializing in dogs of certain breeds, sizes, or circumstances. For example, there are more than 70 rescues dedicated to Golden Retrievers in the United States. These rescue groups take in dogs from a variety of situations:

- ☑ Surrendered by their owners for a variety of reasons
- ☑ Signed over to rescue organizations from overcrowded shelters
- ☑ Found as strays or taken from abusive owners by animal control officers
- ☑ Acquired from puppy mills (there are various ways dogs come into rescue from puppy mills)

In short, dogs wind up in shelters and rescue groups for myriad reasons. Homeowners who have been foreclosed upon often struggle to find dog-friendly rental units and sadly have

to relinquish their dogs to rescue. Sometimes dogs lose their owners to illnesses or old age and then find themselves in shelters and rescues. Lively breeds and large breeds are likely to come into rescue after being surrendered by their owners or dumped at shelters because their owners find them to be too much to manage. While dogs are occasionally surrendered or abandoned because they are aggressive or sick, those circumstances are much less common than most people believe. Some rescues specialize in rehabilitating puppy mill breeding dogs.

### **How do I get in touch with a rescue?**

One of the easiest ways to find a rescue is to access websites like [Petfinder.com](http://Petfinder.com), [adoptapet.com](http://adoptapet.com), or [pets911.com](http://pets911.com), where rescues and shelters commonly post their available dogs. From there, you can access rescue websites to learn more about their requirements. Rescues often also have blogs, Facebook pages, and Twitter accounts, so if you are familiar with any of these social networking tools you can find rescues there, too. Another way to find a rescue is simply to do an internet search for “(breed of choice) (your state)”.

While researching rescues, keep in mind that those outside your immediate area may still adopt to you. It's usually worth an

email to find out whether a rescue has transport arrangements to help move dogs around the country. Rescuers go to great lengths to match the right dog with the right owner, which sometimes means elaborate travel planning with truckers, pilots, and vacationers to move a dog from foster care to his or her new home.

### **What questions should I expect to be asked by the rescue before adopting?**

Some rescues are stricter than others with their adoption policies, but in general you can expect to be asked to provide the following information:

- ☑ Basic personal contact information
- ☑ Information about others living in your household (including pets)
- ☑ How old are your children (if you have them)? How have they been educated about proper pet care?
- ☑ History regarding dogs
  - Have you had dogs of the particular breed?
  - Were they neutered/spayed?
  - Have you ever abandoned a dog?
  - Have you ever put down a dog?

- ☑ Preferences (if any)
  - Male/female
  - Age
  - Willing to adopt old or physically handicapped dogs
  - Willing to adopt dogs with behavioral issues
  - Willing to adopt mixed-breed dogs
  - Potty training preference
- ☑ Do you own/rent your home?
  - If you rent, you normally have to provide a letter from your landlord stating he allows dogs
- ☑ Do you have a fenced yard?
  - This is not necessarily a deal breaker, but you'll need a greater commitment to dog walking if you don't have a fenced yard. Many rescues will not consider an invisible fence acceptable; a 6' fence is ideal for most breeds.
- ☑ Are you willing to provide training for your dog?
- ☑ How long will your dog be left alone?
  - The answer to this question is usually eight hours for working people, which can be hard on a dog. If you need to leave your dog alone for that long, please consider hiring a dog walker or putting your dog in daycare.

- ☑ How much time will you exercise your dog each day?
  - The correct answer to this question really depends on the breed. Some breeds only require a few walks a day while others need to get out and run. Please be sure your breed research includes the exercise requirements of the dog.
- ☑ Will you crate train your dog?
  - There are many different views on crate training, but many people find it to be very helpful.
- ☑ What will you do with your dog when you travel?
  - A good relationship with a kennel or friend who will dog-sit is a must!
- ☑ What are your plans for your dog in case you fall ill or have to take an extended trip?
  - It is imperative to have a plan for where your dog will go if something unexpected happens to you.
- ☑ Are you willing to travel to pick up your dog?
- ☑ How much do you expect to spend on your dog annually?
  - This question is asked of people to ensure their ideas about veterinary and feeding costs are realistic. Over the life of a dog, most people spend

\$500-\$1,000 per year (depending on the size of the dog). Costs can escalate if the dog has health problems. If you are concerned about health care costs, you might consider purchasing pet health insurance or contributing monthly to a savings account set aside for your pet's care.

- ☑ When can we schedule a home visit?
  - All reputable rescues require home visits. Some do so virtually through photos and video while others require a person to actually visit your home.

The purpose of this extensive inquiry is not only to evaluate you as a potential adopter but also to ensure that you have thoroughly considered your decision to adopt.

### **How much does it cost to adopt a dog?**

Saving dogs costs rescues *a lot* of money! For example, one rescue took in 371 dogs and spent an average of \$323.46 per dog in 2010. That same rescue charges \$150 to \$350 per dog, depending on age.<sup>vi</sup> Reputable rescues provide dogs with veterinary care including an update on vaccines, spay or neuter (if not already altered), and whatever surgeries and medications

are necessary to make a dog healthy. Some dogs require amputations, cancer treatments, cataract surgeries, and other major medical procedures before they are ready for adoption.

If you just think of the medical costs you don't have to pay for your dog during the first year because the rescue already took care of them for you, you'll see that adoption fees are minimal in comparison. You might even feel compelled to send additional annual donations...

### **What should you ask when evaluating a rescue?**

- Do you disclose your annual operating budget? Do you have paid positions?
  - Especially if the rescue is a 501(c)3 non-profit, they are required to disclose their annual revenue and expenses. Rescues are generally completely made up of volunteers, so if someone is profiting off the organization (other than vets!) then you might want to think twice about their motives.
- Do you require me to return my dog if I have to relinquish it for any reason?

- This contractual clause is one indication that they actually care about the dog's living situation.
- ☑ Do you require a home visit?
  - Any reputable rescue will require some type of home visit, be it virtual or physical.
- ☑ Do you allow for some kind of trial period?
  - Some rescues will let you do an overnight with the dog before making a decision; others will hold your check for a week or two to ensure your new dog is a good fit.
- ☑ Do you only adopt out dogs in good health, and will you provide his or her medical records?
- ☑ Do you require a home visit?

Dogs of all ages, from puppies to “past their prime,” are available through rescue organizations. Many rescues provide foster homes for their dogs, which is an advantage for potential adopters. Dogs’ personalities tend to unfold after being in a home for a while, so being able to meet them after they have been living in a home is very helpful (as opposed to meeting them in a shelter).

When adopting a dog from a foster home you can normally get a better idea of how he would be in your home. You can also find out things like: How is this dog with children? Other dogs? Cats? Squirrels? Does he walk on a leash well? Does he mark (pee on furniture)? Is he food aggressive? Does he sleep in a dog bed or will he sleep on my head? The answer to all of these questions can generally be obtained from foster parents.

### **Adopting distressed dogs**

There is something about being human that makes us inclined to help others in need. In this case, I'm referring to dogs with unfortunate pasts that have left them in need of physical and emotional rehabilitation. Here are a few reasons why you would adopt a distressed dog from a puppy mill or other abusive situation:

- ☑ Because he or she will know you saved him, and in time you will see he is grateful
- ☑ Because he or she needs help and you have the time and patience to assist him

- ☑ Because you would enjoy the unique experience of achieving small celebrations with a dog who had nothing before he or she had you
- ☑ Because you're looking for the best "best friend" in the world

Here are a few reasons why you wouldn't adopt a distressed dog:

- ☑ Because rehabilitation is a long process that does not usually provide instant gratification
- ☑ Because you spend more time away from home than the average person
- ☑ Because you have small children at home, your home is noisy, or you are particularly impatient

Training a dog requires time, patience, love, and sensitivity, but rehabilitating a distressed dog requires those traits in abundance. It also takes support from friends and family because you will have days when you want to pull out your hair. But, on the flipside, most people who have adopted puppy mill breeders and other distressed dogs don't regret it because the dogs' gratitude is so apparent.

## Adopting Older Dogs

A common misconception about adopting an older dog is that he will not bond with you. If you are nice to the dog, there is nothing farther from the truth. I have yet to meet any dog who has not bonded with a loving, patient adopter.

Adopting older dogs comes with many benefits. Compared with puppies, they are set in their personalities, so when you meet them, you know exactly who they are going to be. Additionally they are calmer and more independent than puppies. Many can be left alone for a while each day and are potty trained, and for the ones who aren't, they often catch on quickly. The downside to adopting an older dog is that he or she most likely won't be



**Libby Rose, adopted as an old dog she gave her "mom" almost two wonderful years**

with you as long as a puppy would, but in the end you'll look back and see how every minute with him or her was special.

# Section 3

## FINDING A REPUTABLE BREEDER

**T**hough I hope I've convinced you to adopt, you might just have your heart set on getting a puppy from a breeder. If so, here is how to carefully evaluate breeders to ensure you are getting a happy, healthy puppy from a sound environment.

*First, Research the breed.* Be sure you understand the temperament, congenital defects (likely inherited illnesses), grooming requirements, and exercise needs. Animal Planet's *Dogs 101* show does a great job describing different breeds each week, and books and internet resources abound with breed information. If you have an affinity for a specific breed, consider picking up one of our *Lost Souls: FOUND!* books about that breed to read firsthand accounts from fosters and adopters. Carefully considering the breed you bring into your home can help ensure your new pet fits your lifestyle perfectly.

*Second, research breeders through breed clubs and rescues.* Most breeds have a club in each state. While their list of

breeders is not infallible, it's probably a good place to start. For most breeds you can also find a local rescue. Call the rescue or visit the rescue's website to see if any reputable breeders are recommended. You can be sure that if anyone knows the disreputable breeders in the area, rescue groups do! They can at least help steer you away from bad breeders.

***Once you select a breeder, ask them the following questions:***

- ☑ What is your history with dogs? What made you interested in breeding?
  - The answer should have something to do with loving the breed and wanting to better it. If he or she is involved in dog-related activities, all the better; it's an indication that he or she is truly into dogs and not just breeding for money.
- ☑ How many dogs do you own? How often do you breed each one?
  - He or she should only have the number of dogs he can support with individual attention, and the dogs should not be bred excessively.

- ☑ What are the congenital defects of the breed? What steps have you taken to decrease those defects?
  - At this point the breeder should rattle off every possible defect and give you an answer that involves screening and testing his breeding dogs. Listen for words like *O.F.A.ed*, *thyroid*, *CERF certified*, or *vWD tested*.<sup>vii</sup> All of these tests should be familiar to a good breeder. Don't be too impressed with champion bloodlines—they can still carry these genetic defects. Make sure dogs are screened.
- ☑ How close do you breed your dog's bloodline?
  - Inbreeding is the most obvious cause of congenital defects.
- ☑ Where are the puppies being raised?
  - "In the house" is the best answer; that way the pups are familiar with common household noises.
- ☑ How frequently are the puppies handled by humans?
  - The answer should be frequently. You want a puppy who is comfortable with human contact, of course!

- ☑ What kind of support will you give me throughout the life of my dog? Can I call on you with questions in the future?
- ☑ What is included in your contract?
  - A good contract is meant to protect both the buyer and the breeder. It should include a replacement or refund policy if the dog develops congenital ailments, usually throughout the dog's first two years. It should also include a requirement to spay/neuter your pet and to return your pet to the breeder should any unforeseen circumstance arise where you need to relinquish your dog.

*You should also expect the breeder to ask you questions similar to what a rescue might ask (see list beginning on page 14).*

*Always insist on visiting a breeder's facility and **MEETING THE PUPPY'S PARENTS** in their living environment.* When you go see the puppies, the breeder should enthusiastically show you where the puppies are whelped, where they sleep, play, feed and interact with family members. The dogs' environment should not smell and should have ample space for the dogs to

exercise and socialize. When visiting, take note of the breeders other dogs (and children?). They should all be well-socialized, friendly, and reasonably calm. (Note: It is possible that the breeder does not have the puppy's father onsite. This is not unusual).

***BREEDER RED FLAGS: If you encounter the following, run away with your hands in the air, screaming!***

- ☑ The breeder does not answer the aforementioned questions to your liking.
- ☑ The breeder does not have a thorough application process including personal questions.
- ☑ The breeder does not have a contract that obviously is meant to protect him, you, and *the puppy*.
- ☑ The breeder is breeding multiple breeds of dogs and/or has a very large kennel with hundreds of dogs.
- ☑ The breeder breeds his females every cycle.
- ☑ The breeder breeds close relatives.
- ☑ The breeder is hesitant when you ask to visit.
- ☑ The breeder is willing to ship you a dog without meeting you.

- ☑ The breeder does not have a policy indicating that you must return the dog if you have to relinquish it.
- ☑ The breeder is USDA licensed. (See above section entitled: *What is a puppy mill?*)

# Section 4

## HELPING NEEDY DOGS

One might wonder how puppy mills can possibly be legal. While dogs are supposed to be protected under the 1966 Animal Welfare Act (AWA), there are many loopholes. “Enforced” by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), large scale breeders are supposed to be licensed and regularly inspected, but there are only a few inspectors in each state and way too many farms. Additionally, the licensing only applies to breeders selling puppies through brick-and-mortar retailers. Breeders who only sell online are not required to be licensed at all.

USDA licensed breeders regularly get away with many violations of the AWA and continue to operate with animals living in conditions far below any reasonable standard of care.<sup>viii</sup> With documentation of failed inspections to prove it, animal welfare

organizations are constantly accusing the USDA of being too lax with their punishment of crimes against animals.

If you would like to help put an end to puppy mill suffering, the number one thing to do is educate yourself and others about how to avoid supporting it. That means getting pets only from shelters, rescues, or breeders you have visited and carefully researched.

One of the most obvious ways to help a needy dog is to adopt. If you're not too particular, consider adopting an older or distressed dog, or perhaps you could bring a black dog into your home, as they tend to be the last to get adopted due to people's superstitions and dim shelter lighting.

Another way to help is to get involved with local rescue organizations. Most are in desperate need of fosters, transportation volunteers, website administrators, accountants, lawyers, seamstresses (to make diapers and belly bands for dogs), newsletter editors, adoption coordinators, etc., as the number of dogs coming into rescue is ever increasing.

Opening your heart and home to needy dogs as a foster parent takes patience and an ability to “go with the flow,” but volunteering in this way is very rewarding. Check with your local rescue organizations about foster training and specific details, as foster programs vary from rescue to rescue.

If you, like me, are inspired to do even more to help end this suffering, work within your local government to pass laws prohibiting the sale of puppies and kittens at pet shops. Albuquerque, San Francisco, West Hollywood, and several other cities have already passed similar laws, and your community could be next.<sup>ix</sup> This is a big step in reducing puppy mill suffering because of the considerable role pet shops play in distributing puppy mill puppies.

Contact your local shelter to find out what measures are being taken to fight puppy mills in your state. Sign petitions (online and on paper) and send letters to your congresspeople asking for tighter and more widely enforced regulations. Volunteer with organizations fighting puppy mills.

“We must fight against the spirit of unconscious cruelty with which we treat the animals. Animals suffer as much as we do. True humanity does not allow us to impose such sufferings on them. It is our duty to make the whole world recognize it. Until we extend our circle of compassion to all living things, humanity will not find peace.” -Albert Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization*

# Section 5

## RESOURCES

- ☑ Kyla Duffy's Advocacy Websites:
  - Happy Tails Books
    - <http://happytailsbooks.com/>
  - Up For Pups
    - <http://upforpups.org/>
  
- ☑ Researching breeds:
  - Dog Breed Info Center
    - <http://www.dogbreedinfo.com/>
  - Animal Planet Dog Breed Selector
    - <http://animal.discovery.com/breedselector/dogselectorindex.do>

- ☑ Finding adoptable dogs:
  - <http://www.adoptapet.com/>
  - <http://www.pets911.com/>
  - <http://www.petfinder.com/>
  
- ☑ Rehabilitating distressed dogs:
  - Mill Dog Manifesto
    - <http://upforpups.org/mill-dog-manifesto-ebook/>
  - Dog Blessed: Puppy Mill Survivor Stories
    - <http://happytailsbooks.com/buy/>
  
- ☑ Animal Sale Scams:
  - ASPCA Puppy Scams and Cons
    - <http://www.asPCA.org/fight-animal-cruelty/puppy-mills/puppy-scams-cons.aspx>
  
- ☑ Puppy mill information:
  - Humane Society Puppy Mill Information
    - <http://stoppupmills.org/>

- ASPCA puppy mill information
  - <http://www.asPCA.org/fight-animal-cruelty/puppy-mills/>
- Puppy Mill Dog's Voice – educational website about puppy mills and pet stores
  - <http://www.pupPymilldogsvoice.org/>
- United Against Puppy Mills – website covering zoning, legislation, and public awareness
  - <http://www.unitedagainstpupPymills.org/>
- Wisconsin puppy mill project – working to end WI puppy mills through education
  - <http://www.nowisconsinpupPymills.com/>
- Prisoners of Greed – puppy mill education
  - <http://www.prisonersofgreed.org/>
- Last Chance for Animals – working to reform pet stores
  - <http://www.lcanimal.org/>

- Pet Store Cruelty – organization raising awareness about pet stores
  - <http://www.petstorecruelty.org/>
- Best Friends – information about USDA inspections
  - <http://network.bestfriends.org/9045/news.aspx>
- Direct access to USDA inspections
  - [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_welfare/inspection\\_list.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/inspection_list.shtml)

# ABOUT HAPPY TAILS BOOKS™



Happy Tails Books™ supports animal rescue efforts by showcasing the love and joy adopted dogs have to offer. Publications by Happy Tails Books serve not only to entertain but also to educate readers about adoption, breed characteristics, and other important facets of domestic animal advocacy. A significant portion of proceeds from each sale is donated back to animal rescue and welfare organizations. To submit your own story or purchase books, stationary, and gifts that give back, visit <http://happytailsbooks.com>.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kyla Duffy is a foster parent who founded Happy Tails Books and Up For Pups to help needy animals and share the joy volunteering can bring. She holds two bachelor's degrees in marketing and Spanish translation and a master's degree in organizational leadership.

## ABOUT UP FOR PUPS

Up For Pups is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of mistreated domestic animals by raising public awareness through creative, memorable initiatives.

Up For Pups sponsors the publication of the Fido Guide-o series to promote the responsible care and ownership of animals. To learn more about Up For Pups' humane education initiatives or to make a donation, visit <http://upforpups.org>

# ReFeRences

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- i [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Backyard\\_breeder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Backyard_breeder)
- ii [http://www.pupppymillrescue.com/what\\_is\\_a\\_puppy\\_mill.htm](http://www.pupppymillrescue.com/what_is_a_puppy_mill.htm)
- iii <http://www.prisonersofgreed.org/actions.html>
- iv <http://www.friendsofanimals.org/programs/spay-neuter/puppy-mills-pet-shops-the-akc-basic-facts.html>
- v [http://www.awarenessday.org/national/pm\\_info.html](http://www.awarenessday.org/national/pm_info.html)
- vi <http://adoptaboston.com>
- vii [http://members.tripod.com/antique\\_fcr/goodbreeder.html#OFA](http://members.tripod.com/antique_fcr/goodbreeder.html#OFA)
- viii [http://stopppupppymills.org/frequently\\_asked\\_questions.html#2\\_Are\\_there\\_any\\_federal\\_laws\\_that\\_regula](http://stopppupppymills.org/frequently_asked_questions.html#2_Are_there_any_federal_laws_that_regula)
- ix <http://www.saynotoanimalsinpetshops.com/index.html>