

Tips for Pet Adoption

Selecting a pet can be a very emotional event. Take time to research the type of dog that will fit best in your and your family's lifestyle to avoid making impulse decisions. Remember that your new canine friend can spend up to ten years or more with you and you need to make an informed decision that is best for all humans and dogs involved.

Realistically assess how much time and resources you have for your new dog. Things to think about include:

- Certain breeds will require regular trips to the groomer to properly care for their coat.
- Many breeds will require a high amount of exercise each day in order to keep up with their energy level.
- If the dog is a puppy, it will require more time for housetraining and socialization than a mature dog.
- Puppies of course will require time for training sessions and classes but even adult dogs will require that you put in time so that they learn the basics. A dog that comes with behavioral issues will require additional time and commitment to help them acclimate to your household.
- What is the general flow of your lifestyle? What type of social activities do you attend and how would the dog fit into your life?
- Do you have children? Other pets? Do many people visit your house and will the dog have to interact with them?

Are you looking for a mixed breed or a purebred? Even if you decide on a mixed breed, you should do your homework into breed traits. A mixed breed dog will likely exhibit some of the traits of the parent breeds. It's important to know what a dog was originally bred for. For example, if you live in a small apartment with small children, you probably don't want a dog with a herding breed heritage, as these types of dogs require abundant exercise and may chase/herd your children around the house. Likewise if you're a generally sedentary person, adopting a sporting dog such as a Labrador or Golden Retriever will not be a good match, unless you intend to seriously increase your daily exercise.

Puppy or adult dog? Many people do not anticipate the needs of a puppy – which include house training, socialization, chewing and other destructive behavior, basic training, and regular veterinary visits. If you have a very hectic lifestyle, consider an older dog. There are many advantages of an older dog, including the likelihood that the dog is already housetrained and may have had some training from its previous owners, and that the dog may have matured out of the chewing stage.

If you are brand new to dog ownership, or just can't make a decision, consider asking a professional trainer for assistance. Many trainers are happy to work with a client who needs help finding the right dog, and can assist you in making your selection.

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Use web sites such as www.petfinder.com, www.asPCA.org/adoption/, www.adoptapet.com and www.theshelterpetproject.org to find local shelters and rescue groups in your area. You can also visit the AKC breed rescue directory site at www.akc.org/breeds/rescue/cfm. Once you've narrowed your search, do your homework by visiting their web sites and facilities if they have one. Many rescues have foster homes instead of a regular brick and mortar facility.

Things you want to research are:

- Does the shelter/rescue do temperament testing of their dogs? Can they provide you with information on the dog's personality and traits?
- Do they allow you to interact with the dog prior to adoption? Do they allow you to bring your other dog(s) for introductions?
- Do they require a home visit and an application? While some people find this to be a lot of work, these steps can assist you in finding the best pet for your lifestyle. Shelters and rescue groups should show care and concern about where the dog is placed and should be interested in asking you questions to make sure this is the best match for everyone involved.
- If there are many people in your household, including children, make sure they interact with the dog prior to adoption; and make sure that everyone is on the same page with the decision. Bringing the dog home should be a unanimous decision for everyone involved!
- Have a plan in place before you bring home the dog! Everyone in your household should agree upon who will be assigned what duties in the dog's care.
- Have you found a professional pet sitter? Visit petsit.com/locate to find a professional pet sitter in your area to care for your new pet if you plan a vacation or need midday dog walks while you work.
- Will the pet be spayed/neutered and microchipped? Many, if not most, shelters require that the dog be sterilized prior to bringing the dog home, and many now provide microchipping services as well.



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