

BEFORE YOU CHOOSE A DOG

Consider your lifestyle BEFORE you look for a dog. This will help you decide on the size and temperament of the dog of your dreams, and will make you more likely to bring home a pet that is compatible with your needs.

Some of the things you should consider are:

- why you are getting a dog (companionship, exercise, protection)
- how much time your dog will be alone
- whether you need a dog that will get along with children
- the age and strength of everyone in your household
- whether you need a dog that will get along with other pets
- how much time you have to exercise a dog
- how much time you are willing to put into training a dog
- whether you have had a dog before
- whether you want an enthusiastic or a laid-back dog
- whether you are strong-willed or more sensitive
- whether you are home enough to housebreak and train a puppy
- how attached you are to your “things”
- whether you can tolerate shedding
- the size and type of your home and yard
- whether you have a fence, how high, and what kind
- restrictions on the size or type of dog allowed (HHS requires written landlord verification)
- whether you will walk a dog (imperative) or let him out in your yard (dogs DO NOT get enough exercise just hanging out in a yard)
- whether a family member is allergic to dogs
- whether there are special considerations (a dog that will travel every weekend, a dog you can take to work, a dog you can take to a nursing home)

Make sure you can afford a dog.

- Dog supplies (collar, IDs, leash, bedding, toys, travel accessories, etc)
- Food (quality, nutritional food is not cheap, but it is necessary for your dog’s good health)
- Health care (yearly vaccinations/boosters, general checkups, emergency care)
- Grooming is a necessity for good health. Consider how long YOU would go without a bath and hair brushing (depending on the hair/fur and length, this can run a couple hundred dollars a year if you will not be doing it yourself)
- Licensing (a yearly legal requirement)
- Dog walking/Pet Sitting
- Boarding (expect \$20 - \$45 a day + a bath afterwards (\$) to wash away kennel smell)
- Training, \$150 and up (Many dogs that come into shelters were probably housetrained and socialized at one point; HOWEVER, the traumatic changes in their environment may cause some dogs to require a ‘re-training’ period. Whether you take on this task yourself or call in a professional, please have the training done IN YOUR HOME, WITH YOU PRESENT—the environmental factors the dog will be spending his/her life with)

Consider who will walk the dog, feed the dog, exercise the dog. If you are relying on children for these jobs, forget it! They will soon get bored or go off to a friend’s house, camp, or college. The adults in the household have to want and be willing to care for the dog.

When you are looking at a dog in a shelter, squat sideways to the kennel, without looking directly at the dog, and see if the dog watches you quietly or comes over to greet you. Both are good responses. If you have children, be sure to notice how the dog responds to them when you visit with the dog outside.

Don't let your children choose your dog. There are characteristics of different dogs that only an adult can understand. Toy breeds are too delicate for children to hug and carry. Small dogs are more likely to bite if provoked or chased into a corner. Herding dogs may nip at running children. Large dogs can scratch or knock over a small child. Dogs bred to be guardians may not behave when your child has a lot of friends over.

Keep in mind that puppies are a lot of work, and that, since their bladders aren't fully developed, you must be home to housebreak a puppy. Generally, a puppy can only hold its bladder a hour for each month of age (4 months old = 4 hours, but that fully depends on the puppy's actual need to eliminate). Some owners are also surprised by how big their puppies grow. **DO NOT GET a puppy if you don't want it to grow up, because IT WILL.**

Adult dogs, regardless of age, can be trained. They are calmer, less likely to chew, and better able to hold their bladder than puppies. Also, you already know their size and temperament.

If you are a couch potato, you don't want to choose an active dog that needs a lot of exercise to be happy. **If you are a first time dog owner**, you don't want to choose a dominant dog that can be difficult to train. **If you work all day**, consider an adult dog that's more laid back.

Buying a dog from a breeder doesn't guarantee good health or temperament. In fact, mixed breeds/mutts sometimes have fewer issues than some of the most popular, over-bred breeds. And really, please don't buy from people looking to make a buck, while shelter animals languish, wishing, waiting, hoping for a new home. A breeder's excuse for this practice is to perpetuate good bloodlines, but the truth is many people who buy from breeder's spay/neuter their dogs anyway, so where is the 'perpetuation'?... going in the breeder's pocket with the next litter...

NEVER BUY FROM 'BACKYARD' BREEDERS OR PET STORES THAT WILL NOT GIVE YOU A VERIFIABLE HISTORY OF A PUPPY'S PARENTS. MORE THAN LIKELY, THERE ARE PUPPY MILLS INVOLVED, WHERE BREEDING DOGS ARE KEPT IN SQUALID, ABUSIVE, UNBELIEVABLY HORRID CONDITIONS. Check the Internet for puppy mill info.

The only dogs that are considered hypoallergenic are Poodles and Bichon Frise. They, as well as Maltese and some Schnauzers that also have hair instead of fur, need to be groomed often. There are a number of other dogs that are light shedders, need less grooming, and do fine with many allergic dog owners.

If you are getting a second dog, it is usually easiest to bring the opposite sex of your resident dog into the home. Both dogs should be altered.

If you are bringing a dog into a cat household, see if the dog's history involved a cat. If not, you can sometimes get an idea by quickly moving a furry toy that squeaks in front of the dog.

If you are looking at puppies, look for one that responds to you without throwing himself at you, and that seems able to calm down after a sudden noise or movement.

If you have a fenced yard, check whether there are gaps or holes and whether you can push it out from the bottom. There are some dogs that are known escape artists and other that were bred to dig. Dogs that jump well can often climb or jump even a five foot fence if they are motivated to do so.

Remember, a yard does not equal exercise. If your dog runs around the yard by him/herself, this is a display of 'boredom/looking for something to do'.

And **Never, Ever chain** your dog. This is **cruel and inhumane ignorance** at its finest. And chaining a dog can cause it to become territorial and aggressive to anyone that approaches it.

The dog has come up through the millennium as a pack animal. Over generations, through breeding/conditioning, having been integrated and domesticated, dogs have come to rely on humans for survival.

The health and welfare of a dog is a human's responsibility. If you do not want to bring a dog into your home to live as a cherished family member under the same roof as you and your family, then DO NOT GET A DOG.