

Considerations When Choosing a New Dog

Dogs provide many years of unconditional love and companionship to their owners. It is important to select the right dog for one's lifestyle to prevent unnecessary behavioral conflicts that can arise from a mismatched dog and owner. What size of dog, what grooming requirements it will have, the level of physical exercise it will need, and its overall temperament are some considerations to factor before deciding to adopt or purchase a new pet. Potential health problems inherent in certain breed should be weighed before deciding between a purebred and a mixed breed dog. It is also important to decide who in the family will be primarily responsible for the feeding, exercise, grooming, and health care of the pet. A dog should never be given as a gift, because a lot of commitment will be required on the part of the owner.

A particular breed or the predominant lineage in a mutt can reveal a lot about the likely personality of a dog. High energy dogs like working and sporting breeds were bred to interact closely with people and will require a lot of mental and physical activity to avoid boredom and separation anxiety problems. Terriers are very intelligent, but they are also very independent and may be difficult to train. Behavioral conflicts can be reduced by first choosing a breed of dog that fits your lifestyle. A large dog that requires a lot of space to run would not be appropriate for an apartment unless the owner is committed to daily jogging with the dog for exercise.

Long haired dogs will require regular visits to the groomer and more frequent bathing. It is important that these dogs become acclimated at a young age to being groomed. This is a good opportunity to instill good social skills however, and extra effort may be needed to socialize a dog that never leaves the house.

Before purchasing a dog from a breeder, consider how many homeless pets enter shelters and rescue groups each year. Research should be done about potential health problems to which a purebred dog may be predisposed. These can increase the cost of future healthcare considerably. Also, finding a responsible and reputable breeder may require time and numerous references. Avoid "puppy mill" puppies found at trading shows and in pet stores. They tend to be line bred and are very susceptible to deformities, contagious disease, and heavy parasite burdens that may cause illness. If a purebred dog is chosen, it should be a high quality animal with no faults for the breed. "Pet quality" dogs are sometimes sold that would not be able to be shown as representative of their breed.

Families should think carefully about whether children are ready for the responsibility and care of a dog. The parents are ultimately the primary caretakers of the pet. Very small children should be taught appropriate handling and petting to avoid accidental emergency room visits for a bitten finger. In general, a young puppy is better suited to learning to live with children. Hierarchy is essential to a dog's confidence and security, and conflicts can arise when a dog considers a child to be subordinate.

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A veterinary consultation before choosing a new dog can give insight on what to expect over the many years of dog ownership. Once you've picked the puppy that fits you, read about raising a puppy.

