

## Helpful Reading Before Adopting a Dog

Be realistic – know what type of dog you and your family can handle. If you have three small children, do you really need a high energy dog to add to your household and work load? Think long and hard about the kind of dog who will be best for you and your family and your schedule, and then start hitting the shelters and rescues.

Puppies require as much attention as a child. Are you ready for that commitment?

Consider an older, already housebroken dog who already knows basic commands.

Ask the shelter staff which dogs they like to walk. These people interact with the dogs every day. They can tell you which dogs are high energy and need lots of exercise and which dogs would be great couch potatoes. Happy homes consist of dog owners who have dogs with a lower energy level or the same energy level as themselves and their families. This is more important than choosing a specific breed.

Do not stare at the dogs through the kennel wire. Be careful of direct eye contact until the dog feels comfortable with you. Also, realize you are a lot taller than them, and that may scare a dog. Crouch down to their level, so you are not as intimidating.

Please realize that dogs in the kennel get excited when people visit. They bark and jump up and down. To really learn about a dog, get him/her out of the kennel and out for a walk away from the noise and other dogs. Let the dog burn off some of that pent-up energy, and then spend some one-on-one time in a more relaxed environment.

Walk the dog you are interested in for a good 10 to 15 minutes. Remember, these dogs are living in cages and are excited to get out. Give them time to stretch their legs and sniff around while walking and let them settle in.

Let the potential new dog get used to you. Sit on a bench in the play yard and let him/her come up to you and sniff you and ask for interaction (pets).

You do not have to adopt the same day you meet a dog. If no one else is interested or competing with you to adopt the dog, come back another day to spend more time with the dog. See if he/she remembers you and is happy to see you. The main thing is, are you happy to see the dog?

Some people insist on a specific breed. Remember that mixed breed dogs make the best pets, as they have good traits from multiple breeds. Some people say that that mixed breeds are healthier than purebreds. If you must get a specific breed, please check online for breed specific rescues.

You would be surprised how many of the \$500+ dogs end up at shelters and rescues. Older dogs are WONDERFUL and easy additions to your homes. Divorce and deaths leave so many older and senior dogs without homes, due to no fault of their own. Older dogs are housebroken, calm, easier to walk, and usually already trained.

Shelters are full of pit bulls. Pit bulls love people and they are incredibly loyal. They have a bad reputation. But, the pit bulls you meet at kennels are not bad dogs.

Irresponsible owners deserve the reputation, not the dogs. These dogs are happy, fun, energetic, and full of love and sloppy kisses! Some dogs actually seem to grin at you when you meet them. People call these friendly overtures “submissive grins” and consider them a sign of a sweet dog. Realize that those bared teeth are

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not menacing but just a dog saying “hello.”

If you just lost a beloved dog, wait a little while before bringing home a new dog. You need time to mourn, and your new dog needs to be able to be himself/herself not a shadow of your lost pet. It is only fair to both of you.

Give your new dog **AT LEAST TWO WEEKS** to get used to his/her new home.

Remember, they

need to learn your schedule and learn that you are their new friend. It may take a while before a new dog feels comfortable enough to relax with you. Shelter life is tough on dogs, so give them a change to ease back into a happier environment.

Training builds a bond between owner and dog. A well trained dog is easier to live with and happier, because he/she is pleasing you. It is never too early or too late to start correcting bad behaviors. If you have no training experience, take a class. Look online for a basic obedience class and show off your new best friend. Most training is more for the owners than the dogs, but you will both benefit and build trust with each other.

Whatever you do, please do not buy a dog from a pet store in a mall or from some backyard breeder who does not take care of his/her dogs. Puppy mills take all forms and feed the retail pet stores that sell puppies. These pups are born to over-bred females who are not kept up-to-date on vaccines, are treated horribly, and are often killed when they can no longer produce puppies. Just because the breeder is not at a huge farm does not mean it is not really a puppy mill. Just ask to see where the mother and where the pups are kept.