



FOR ALL YOUR PET QUESTIONS

So You Think You're Ready For A Dog?

Section 1 ~

Are you sure you know what you are getting into?

You are already ahead of the game since you are doing some research before deciding whether you are even ready for a dog, let alone whether you are choosing the right one. There is a lot to consider – here are some of those things:

1. Are you neat or messy?

Messy

If you are even a little messy it can be a problem if you aren't prepared for a puppy or even a new adult dog. Most dogs chew, it's a natural behavior particularly for teething puppies and adolescents. A dog will chew indiscriminately until taught what they can and can't chew. So leaving your shoes on the floor can spell – well, chewed shoes.

Neat

If you are a neat person, can you deal with fur and dirt brought in on paws and all kinds of other messes? (Until potty trained they can be even more to clean up after.) Some breeds are neater than others but they are still animals.

2. Do you have enough time and energy for the daily activities that it will take to care for a dog?

Yes

If you never done it remember you will be (unless you have other adult help – kids don't count) feeding, walking, cleaning up after, bathing, grooming, playing with, training, paying expenses for example, every day, 365 days a year for the next 12 - 15 years or more.

No – maybe, I'm not sure

There are ways to lessen some of the chore, not the responsibility, but you can get help with the chores. Pay for help: a dog walker, or a company to pick up doggy do from the yard, there are doggy daycares etc. Barter or trade with someone to bath and groom. Some chores the kids can at least help out, you will probably have to remind them some, but still. On the other hand – Let me be real clear – there is no excuse for not providing your dog with all the things he needs, so make sure you know before you bring him home. Link with other articles



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3. Do you have children?

Yes

Children in the house are important to consider in this process. If you have small children, particularly under the age of six, you are adding another big time consumer to an already busy life (I have raised 4+kids, so I really understand.) Also, I don't have to tell you that small children in particular can be hard on dogs and not all breeds are sturdy and patient enough to withstand an enthusiastic child. And if you are getting a dog or puppy for older children who promise to provide all the care for the dog, keep in mind how clean they keep their room without you reminding them all the time. Just know that Mom, you are the one who will be providing the dog care a great majority of the time.

No

If this is just a temporary situation - you are planning on children in the next 10-15 years, keep this in mind when choosing a breed. You can probably work it out, but it doesn't hurt to think about what it might mean, for example, to have an elderly Miniature Pinscher and bring a baby, who will become a toddler, into the family. I know - too much to speculate, just give it a little thought.

4. Can you (and anyone else you live with) be patient, gentle and consistent until her manners are in place?

Yes

A new dog and especially a puppy will stretch your patience to the breaking point. Until she has her manners well established, she will act like a dog. What that means is she will behave just as you would expect for her breed. Dogs don't understand what we want of them until we teach them. Training is part of the deal you make when you bring a dog into your family. Remember dogs, bark, chew, dig, and until potty trained house soil. A puppy depending on his breed will take a year or so to mature into an adult dog, they can be trained but they will have some behaviors just because they are young (high energy level.)

No

This speaks for itself; you are not ready to make a dog part of the family. You might consider another type of pet. Don't bring a dog home, it will just turn out badly for both of you.

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5. How will you train her with the manners you want her to have? Are you familiar with dog behavior?

- Train him myself – I have experience doing this.**
- Go to training classes, either puppy or adult dog, or both.**
- Have a professional train him.**

Training can be the second most important thing you do to make this relationship work, after choosing the right dog. Until you do there will be frustrations for both of you. So, will you train her yourself – you have had other dogs and know what you are doing. You will get help – there are inexpensive training programs that you can attend with your dog that will teach you how to train her properly. There are even "puppy training" classes that will help you teach the basics until he is old enough for complete training. You can also hire a professional to come to your home and train your dog. You will have to be involved but this is the easiest way to go.

6. How will everyone in the family do until your dog is properly trained?

- Great, they are all on-board and understand what to expect.**
- I still need to bring them up-to-speed, so they are prepared for the behaviors and know how to react or what to do.**

The whole family needs to be on the same page with how you will handle the behavior of your new family member. They need to be patient, kind etc. If you have children or differences in philosophy you might want to talk about it. [Link to What is your Dog Trying to Tell You.](#)

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7. Would your dog be alone at home all day while you are at work or school?

Yes

Most dog breeds don't do well if left home alone all day. There are other solutions, from having a dog walker come in, to taking time during your lunch to stop home, to doggy daycare. It doesn't always go smoothly at first if you are bringing an adult dog home, you may need to work out the issues. A puppy can not be left alone for more than an hour or two and even that may be extremely traumatizing to your puppy - Link to bring home a puppy article.

You really need to think this through; it most likely will end badly, you should rethink this plan and set up something or not get a dog at this time.

No, I have this part all figured out.

8. Are you away from home frequently for overnight or longer so the dog would be alone?

Yes

I'm sure you realize you have to have alternative plans if you live alone, whether that means a dog sitter, or a kennel. I also hope you realize that leaving your dog alone with a neighbor coming in to feed etc. doesn't work, you will come home to a neurotic dog and probably a destroyed house. You also can't leave them in the yard, the neighbors will call animal control because of the barking etc. Dogs are social beings and they don't do well without our company.

Once again, this probably means your lifestyle isn't ready to get a dog right now. Having a dog is a big commitment.

No, there are always family members at home, or we make alternative plans.

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Section 2 ~

What Do I Need to Consider When Choosing A Dog?

Ok, since you passed the first section, it's now time to start considering what kind of dog, breed, size; temperament etc. will be the best fit. Of course, nothing is perfect, but at least this will give you some things to think about when making these decisions.

1. Are you considering a mixed breed or a pure bred dog?

Mixed Breed

In my opinion the local shelter is the best placed to get a dog, for a minimal fee you usually get the dog, a spay or neutering, initial physical and immunizations. The dogs also are most often rescued from bad situations and have been evaluated by the behavioral experts. If you decided on a backyard puppy or dog, make sure you know what you are getting. [Link to purebred or mixed breed](#)

Pure Breed

What dog breeds are you considering?

Purebred dogs can be very expensive, running into the thousands. The benefit is you can check out the parents, grandparents and many generations back and know exactly what you are getting. (At least you should, I ended up with a 16 lb Maltese from parents and grandparents who were all grand champion dogs and all weighed 7lbs or under – its nature after all) [Link to purebred or mixed breed](#)

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2. What kind of space do you have? Do you own your own home?

This is to help you think about what size dog is realistic. Not all large dogs are incompatible with a small apartment; many large dogs are not very active and do just fine in a small space. Although a really big dog like a Great Dane for example will take up a lot of floor space. And the opposite of that is also true, many small dogs are very active and seem way to much for a small space. If you live in an apartment, you need to check the rules and following them (neighbors have a tendency to turn you in) You should also let your neighbors know you are bringing a new puppy/dog home and suggest they call if they are bothered by – barking, whining, etc,) This courtesy will go a long way to establish good will and patience. P.S. get the approval from your landlord in writing.

3. Do you have a yard? Is it secure?

Yes

No

A yard isn't necessary, but if you have one it can open up what type of dog might work for you, because she may be able to get some of her exercise without you with her. Of course it absolutely must be secure because free roaming is illegal, a nuisance to neighbors but potentially dangerous to your dog (hit by a car, dog fight, other injury) or to others (dog bite, knocking over or scaring someone)

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4. Will it be enough space to house the size dog you are considering properly?

Yes – these are the breeds or breed mix I am considering and I have enough room:

If you haven't done any research about the breed(s) you are considering, make a list above and start reading up about size ranges and space needs

No – I need to rethink my dog choice.

If the dog you were thinking about doesn't work, do some more research and see if there is another dog breed or breed mix you would be happy with.

5. What do you plan to do (activities etc.) with your dog?

You really need to think about what you want to do with your dog. If you want to be able to take your dog into highly social situations you need to look for a dog that will be Ok doing that. If you want a dog to go jogging with you or hiking a couch potato dog wouldn't be a good fit. If you have children there are dogs that do beautifully with children. You get the point. Really think about how you see this dog fitting into your lifestyle. Remember, dogs don't tend to change their basic temperaments anymore than people do

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6. Will the amount of expense you will have to shoulder be an issue?

No

Good, just remember all dogs come with expenses and it doesn't hurt to have some idea what those expenses might be – [Link to What Do I Need for My New Dog](#)

Yes

If this is a issue, you need to think about a dog that doesn't need a professional groomer, or a breed that may have a tendency to have certain health issues. Large dogs eat large amounts of food and everything they need is bigger and therefore more expensive. Little or tiny dogs have their own expense issues. Just be sure you know what you are getting into before you decide.

7. Have owned a dog before? How about any other pet? (I'm really not talking about when you were a kid - your Mom probably provided all the care the dog)

Yes

Great!, then you have a good idea what you are in for. Just be careful you don't skip the other questions, thinking about these issues concretely will help you be as successful, If you are like me you sometimes skip over important stuff and then wish you hadn't later.

No

The reason this question is important is because, many dog breeds are difficult in one way or another they may be difficult to train or need a experienced owner who can set boundries and keep them. And some breeds will just do better if this isn't your first dog.

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8. Do you have other dogs, animals, cats?

Yes

Be careful to learn whether the dog you are considering is known for getting along with whatever pet(s) you already have. And whatever pet you have, make the introductions carefully, you could be setting up the way they will get along for the rest of their lives.

No

Different breeds either get along or not, and that is not always set in stone. Sometimes if you have a dog who isn't doing well being left alone, even for a short while, another dog can help, (I had a Maltese male who became the babysitter for my teenage daughter's beagle puppy – we would even crate them together and the beagle was fine after that being left for short periods of time.)

Well, I know that was a lot of work to figure this all out, but with this tool to help you, you will make the best decision about whether a dog fits into your family and if he does, what will be the best breed. I know we all have certain dogs we particularly like the way they look, or what we have heard about their temperament. But doing research to confirm your ideas will keep you from the heartbreak of bringing home a dog that just doesn't work with your family, lifestyle and your own temperament. Again thanks for taking the time.

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