

How to Decide on the Best Dog for Your or Your Family Handy Chart and Checklist

Before you consider adopting a dog, work through this handy checklist, so that you select the best do for you or your family. This chart helps work through considering your own situation, the personality of the dog and his health, so you can make the best decision possible.

Consider Your Situation:

How big is your home?

Large dogs need space to roam around. They'll need larger bags of food, larger crates, and more space on the couch. Small dogs are more suited to tiny apartments. However, if you're willing to make the room and take your large dog for long walks you can make a small home work.

How much time do you have to walk a dog each day?

Puppies need to be let out every two or three hours. If you're not home during the day, and you're not willing to pay a pet walker, you need an older dog that is already housebroken.

A highly energetic dog will also need to go for long walks. Otherwise all that energy will be used to wreak havoc inside your home.

Do you have neighbors close by?

Some dogs rarely bark and some bark when the wind blows. A yappy dog doesn't match well with thin apartment walls.

If you have children, how old are they?

Toddlers and puppies aren't always a good mix. Small dogs, especially can be harmed by a young child's hug and might bite to protect itself. An old dog that is not used to children won't be a good mix either. A calm dog that enjoys playing is the perfect mix.

Evaluate Your Finances

You need to ensure you have enough money to feed and care for your dog...especially when it comes to taking care of their health. Adopting a dog with health issues is an extremely kind thing to do. But be sure you have the resources to pay for ongoing vet care and medications.

And remember, the unexpected will always come up, so you need to be prepared.

Consider the Dog's Personality

Though shopping by breed can help identify some traits, remember that each dog has its own personality.

When searching for a rescue, spend some time with the dog before making your decision. Be clear on what you want in a dog so you can match your wants with the dog's temperament. There's nothing wrong with an energetic dog if that's what your family wants. There's nothing wrong with a dog that wants to sleep beside you on the couch. It all depends on what's right for your family.

Friendliness:

Does the dog run towards you or shy away?

Energy:

When you take the dog outside does he run around or bask in the sun?

Passive:

Pick the dog up and hold him in your arms like a baby. Does he allow you to rub his tummy or does he squirm to get away?

Playfulness:

Does he chase you or play fetch or does he look bored with your antics?

Skittishness:

Drop your keys or your shoe on the floor behind him and see how he reacts.

Territorial:

Give him a bone and then take it away. If he snaps then this is not a good dog for small children. Older children can be taught not to take treats from the dog but toddlers won't understand.

Consider the Dog's Health

Health Record:

Ask which shots the dog has had. See if you can get a copy of his health records and find out which vet was used.

Fur Health:

Does his fur look healthy? It should be shiny without any bald spots in a healthy dog.

Other Health Points:

Is there any discharge from his eyes, nose or ears? Any other points of concern?

If You Have Concerns:

Ask if you can get a clean bill of health from a vet. Even if he has health concerns, you may still want to adopt. But be sure you're ready for any potential emotional toll and can afford to care for the dog properly.