

To adopt an adult or a puppy?

Contributed by Admin
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TO ADOPT AN ADULT DOG OR A PUPPY

Every member of your family who is going to live with this dog should be present and participate in his selection. Family commitment is an important first step.

Try not to make the mistake of selecting a dog based on your past experience. Some people choose a dog like the one they had when they were growing up, or they select one just like the one that died. Not all dogs of the same breed are alike! In fact, two dogs from the same litter can be totally different. Before making your selection, know what kind of personality best describes you and your family, then find a dog that will fit your personality.

If you consider yourself to be highly assertive and have a very active, busy family, you will probably be happiest with an assertive, outgoing, very friendly, and vivacious dog. You may not be as happy with a shy or submissive dog. Some people, however, greatly enjoy shy, quiet, submissive dogs. These dogs are excellent for senior citizens or for people without children. They take less effort to control and are happy with a quiet, laid-back life-style. Assertive, high energy, outgoing dogs will need more training and obedience work. Be willing to give time for this effort. It will eliminate your having to solve future behavior problems.

There are many ways to find out about the personality of purebred dogs. You can go to the library and read about dogs. You can talk to breeders, behaviorists, veterinarians, and others who work with dogs. Before you decide where to get your puppy, let me advise you to find out as much as you can about the puppy's mother and father, his litter relationship, socialization, and his health. As a general rule female dogs tend to be less dominant than males and would be a better selection for young children. A mixed breed will be every bit as good a friend and companion as a purebred and have fewer inherited genetic defects.

Do not select a pup whose mother is surly or cranky. A pup will mimic his mother! Make sure that the puppy has been taken out of the litter from time to time to be handled and played with by a variety of adults and children of both sexes. A pup should be socialized to other dogs and cats. You want this pup to grow up liking the warmth and affection offered by people and other animals. Sometimes the runt of the litter is not a good selection because he has to fight for space at the lunch counter and is picked on by the bigger, more dominant dogs. Runts can grow into adult dogs with a competitive, fight-for-your-rights attitude. Make sure the pup you select is of a proper weaning age, generally around eight weeks. Early or late weaning can result in adult behavior problems.

Consider the following in selecting an appropriate puppy. In a litter of puppies determine which is the active, dominant one as well as the quiet, submissive one. The latter would probably not be good for a family with children but fine for a single or elderly person where there will not be as much excitement or activity. Check for assertiveness. A pup who mouths and chews your hand is more assertive and will require a firm hand in training. Cradle the pup on his back

in your arms. If he struggles to get down, he is independent and may be difficult to train. Hold him out at arm's length, and if he shows no fear, it indicates that he is trusting you as his leader. Put him on the floor and gently pinch him between his toes and on the fold of skin on his flank. If he shows very little sensitivity, this high pain tolerance indicates that he would be a better adoption for children. Throw a set of keys alongside of him. If he goes to the keys, smells them, and wiggles all over, this is a good sign. If he acts fearful by withdrawing, he may not be able to tolerate the loud noises and unpredictable behavior of young children. Take the puppy to a quiet area. Bend down, clap your hands, and call him. If he comes happily wiggling all over, this is a good sign. If he does not, he may be aloof and independent as an adult dog.

Here are some tips on selecting an appropriate adult dog. It may be difficult, but find out as much as you can about this dog's past. You may be adopting a dog with a behavior problem. On the positive side, most behavior problems are solvable and, contrary to popular notion, you can teach an old dog new tricks! It just takes a little longer and a lot more patience. A definite plus in adopting an adult dog is that someone did not want him, and, if you do and are patient and caring, you will have a devoted friend for life. Look for a dog that is happy and active, not one that is fearful, withdrawn, or aggressive. Keep in mind that wherever you look for an adult dog he will be under tremendous stress, having just been given up or picked up as a stray. As with a puppy, check his tolerance for noise with a set of keys. If he withdraws, he may be shy or fearful, but a patient single person or an adult family could help him overcome his fear. If he returns your glance with a glazed stare, this indicates distrust and aggression. He would not be a good adoption for a family, Take him to a quiet spot and find out if he likes to play, be held, walk alongside, and act equally responsive toward all members of the family. If he was not properly socialized as a puppy or was abused, he may react fearfully to a particular member of your family who may remind him of a former abusive person. The last thing to check is his health. Adopt him on condition of a veterinarian's satisfactory examination.

An advantage of adopting an older adult dog is that you save yourself the craziness of those puppy years. Also, an older dog is more likely to be content with being left alone all day. The advantage of adopting a puppy is the absence of learned behavior problems.