

How to: Choosing the right dog



Getting a dog can be an exciting time for a family. But how do you find a place to get your dog and select the right one? With so much information available, the task of choosing a dog can be daunting, especially to the first time dog owner.

First describe your perfect family dog by answering the questions below.

- Will your dog be around children or grandchildren? *(If yes, temperament of the dog will be important since you'll want a dog with a high tolerance level)*
- Will your dog go on vacation with you? If so, where do you like to travel and where do you stay when you travel? *(If yes, size may matter in some hotels and temperament will be important since you'll want a dog that can adjust to new situations quickly)*
- Will you entertain guests at your house frequently? *(If yes, temperament will be important so your dog accepts strangers readily)*
- Will your dog go jogging with you? *(If yes, you'll want a dog that is energetic and strong enough for running)*
- Will your dog sit in your lap while you read? *(If yes, size may matter)*
- Do you want a dog who is mainly a stay at home companion or a dog who goes everywhere with you? *(Will help determine the number of new situations the dog may encounter on a day to day basis and impacts temperament decisions)*
- Do you want a dog who will get along with other animals? *(If yes, consider having the other animals go with you to meet the dog)*
- Do you want a dog that doesn't shed very much? *(If yes, consider the coat of the dog)*
- Do you want a dog whose haircut costs more than your own? *(If no, rule out dogs that need extensive professional grooming unless you want to learn to do it at home)*
- How much time do you want to spend grooming your dog? *(Consider the coat of the dog)*
- Do you care about the average life-span of your dog? *(Smaller dogs tend to live longer than very large dogs)*



- Does anyone in your family have allergies? *(There are a few non-shedding type dogs that are usually chosen when family members have allergies)*
- How much exercise do you want to give your dog each day? *(Expect a minimum of 30 minutes a day for all dogs, but some dogs will need more)*
- What size dog do you want? *(Consider the breed type to anticipate size)*
- Does the cost of the dog matter to you? *(Shelters and rescue groups usually charge a nominal fee, reputable breeders usually charge higher due to the health guarantees and degree of individualized care they are providing the litter)*
- How long are you willing to wait to get the dog you want? *(Reputable breeders often have waiting lists because their dogs are bred carefully and they generally don't have more than 1-2 litters available at any given time)*
- Is there anything else you want your dog to be able to do with your family? *(dog sports, therapy work, service dog training, etc all require certain temperaments in the dog you select and may be important considerations)*

The answers to the questions above can help you determine the level of predictability you will want in your new pet. One difference between pure and mixed breed dogs is the degree of predictability about what you are getting. With purebred dogs, you can make some gross generalizations about a breed's characteristics such as size, energy level, and coat type which is harder to do when you don't know anything about the dog's breed type.

When trying to make a decision about breed characteristics I usually recommend a two pronged approach:

1. Ask a breeder to describe their breed. You will usually get a glowing review of everything good about the breed.
2. Ask a trainer to describe a particular breed. You will usually get a review of the challenging aspects of a breed.



credit:
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A great book to review common breed characteristics when you are selecting a dog is *The Perfect Match* by Chris Walkowicz.