

# Puppy or Adult Dog: Which Is Right for You?

- If you are looking for a dog, ask your veterinarian about reputable breeders in your area, but don't forget that shelters, rescue societies, and adoption organizations are also great options.
- Consider how much time and patience you can devote to a new pet. Puppies are adorable and entertaining, but they tend to require more time and attention than an adult dog.
- Any new puppy or dog being introduced into the home should be examined by a veterinarian as soon as possible and temporarily separated from all other household pets.

### What Are Some Things to Consider When Choosing a Dog?

Whether you are deciding to adopt a puppy or an adult dog, here are some things you should consider:

- **Breed:** Despite what the books may say, don't expect your new dog to conform to all the details you've read and heard about the breed—they rarely do. Instead, try to select a dog that you think will fit well with your lifestyle. In some cases, a mixed-breed dog may be your best option. Also, don't forget to ask your veterinarian about any medical problems that are particular to certain breeds.
- **Personality:** Don't be tempted to choose a dog just based on looks. Personality and temperament are more important, especially when you consider that you may be spending many years with a pet.
- **Care and grooming required:** If you don't have time to brush your dog every day, then you should consider choosing a dog that has a thinner, shorter coat as opposed to a dog with thick, long hair. Some breeds require regular grooming visits and professional haircuts, so look into these requirements before choosing a dog.
- **Allergies:** Find out ahead of time if anyone in the house is allergic to dogs. You can do this by

spending time at the home of a friend or relative who has dogs.

- **Exercise requirements:** Some dogs are high-energy pets that require a lot of activity, space, attention, and exercise. Before choosing a dog, decide how much time you can devote to walking and other activities.
- **Your new pet's history:** If you are adopting a puppy, try to find out about the health of his or her littermates and parents. If the breed is predisposed to certain medical conditions (for example, hip dysplasia), ask if the puppy's parents were certified as being free of these conditions before they were bred. If you are adopting an adult dog, find out as much as you can about his or her medical and behavioral history.

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Your veterinarian can probably recommend reputable breeders in your area, but don't forget that shelters and adoption organizations are great options, too. Even if you are only interested in a particular breed, there are breed-specific rescue organizations that can help you find the dog of your dreams!

### What Are the Pros and Cons of Raising a Puppy?

Let's face it, puppies are just plain adorable. However, there are advantages and disadvantages to adopting a puppy. Consider these when deciding if a puppy is right for you:

- **Energy level and entertainment:** Compared with adult dogs, puppies tend to have a lot

## Choices and Considerations

more energy. Playing with a puppy can provide hours of entertainment and enjoyment as they discover new things and learn new tricks.

- **Training:** If you don't have time (or patience) for housebreaking and other basic training, a new puppy may not be an ideal option for you.
- **Time commitment:** New puppies need veterinary visits every few weeks for the first several months of their lives. This involves a time commitment and a financial one, too. Puppies (depending on their age at adoption) may not be spayed or neutered yet, so be sure to discuss these arrangements with your veterinarian.
- **Health issues:** Compared with adult dogs, puppies are more susceptible to certain diseases and they can go downhill very quickly when they get sick. Even skipping a meal or two can cause blood sugar levels to drop dangerously low in some puppies. Puppy owners need to be extremely observant for any signs of illness and report any problems to their veterinarian right away.

### What Are the Pros and Cons of Adopting an Adult Dog?

Although puppies are wonderful in many ways, adult dogs can be a better choice for many pet owners. Consider these points when deciding whether to adopt an adult dog:

- **Training:** An adult dog is more likely to already be housebroken and to have some basic training. With patience, you can always “teach an old dog new tricks,” and with an adult dog, you may not have to start from scratch. Remember that an adult dog may also have learned some bad habits that can be addressed through patience and positive-reinforcement training.
- **Wellness care:** Depending on where the dog is from and what care it has received, adult dogs are more likely to already be spayed or neutered and to have received some basic vaccines and wellness care. That said, things like dental disease are more likely to need attention in an adult dog than in a puppy.
- **Adult personality:** Compared with a puppy, an

adult dog is more likely to have an established personality that you can get to know from the beginning. If you are looking for a quiet companion (and not a high-energy source of entertainment), an adult dog may be a better choice than a puppy. This may be particularly true for older pet owners, who may have trouble keeping up with a high-energy puppy.

- **Fewer “unknowns”:** In most cases, adult dogs have achieved their adult size (and sometimes weight), so you have minimal guesswork about how big they will get and what kind of pet they will be in the future.
- **Preexisting issues:** Depending on the dog's age, an adult dog may have some preexisting medical or behavioral problems that need to be addressed. Consider having some basic wellness blood work done when you adopt the dog, and ask your veterinarian if any additional screening tests are recommended. Some dogs may have been abused or have other behavioral problems. It may take a little time and effort for you to earn the dog's trust and help him or her learn more acceptable behavior patterns.

### What Should I Know about Medical Care?

Whether you adopt a puppy or an adult dog, and regardless of where you get the dog from, schedule a veterinary examination as soon as possible. Bring a stool sample and any paperwork (especially vaccine records, fecal testing and deworming history, and spay/neuter information) to your first visit.

Any new puppy or dog being introduced into the home should be examined by a veterinarian as soon as possible and separated from all other household pets for a quarantine period of at least a few weeks.

Despite the best efforts of breeders, shelters, and rescue societies, newly adopted dogs can carry parasites and infectious diseases, so it is important to protect your current pets from any medical problems that can come with a new addition. New pets should be observed closely for any signs of illness. Any problems should be reported to your veterinarian before introducing the new dog or puppy to your other pets.