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Consider All Factors: Choosing the Family Dog

By Steve Allison

There are generally three ways to select the family dog:

–Many people select the family dog based on their experiences with dogs from their past. They may have a fond memory of a dog once owned by someone they knew or of a family dog owned by their family when they were children, and that's it —the selection process is over! That's certainly one way to do it.

–Another way many people select a family dog is by going to a pet store or an animal shelter and taking a walk past the cages; they're all so special, it's almost guaranteed that you'll fall in love with one of them. This method, as easy as it is, is so much easier when you have your children along; dogs seem to know just how to behave to steal a child's heart.

–The third method is less heart-warming but it's probably the surest way to select a family dog that is just right for your family -- it's called 'considering all the factors.'

Considering All The Factors

Before deciding on the dog that will become a part of your home and family there are several questions that you'll need to ask yourself and honestly answer:

How much time do you have for a dog? Some dogs require a lot of attention -- they get very nervous if there is no one home with them and when they get nervous it usually winds up either with a mess to clean up or with something chewed up or scratched up. Some long-haired dogs need daily grooming or that beautiful coat will be a tangled mess in just a very short period and every dog, especially a dog that spends any time in the house, should be bathed, brushed, and have its teeth and ears cleaned about once-a-week. Every dog also requires some degree of one-on-one attention every day; talk to them, scratch their head, feed them, walk them and generally treat them like they are family.

How much space do you have for a dog?

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Dogs need space to move around in and, most importantly, to get the exercise that they need to stay healthy. If you have a large house and yard almost any dog will fit in fine. Larger dogs take up space and eat a lot; also requiring lots of exercise. There are many smaller breeds, however, that are known to be 'apartment dogs;' these smaller dogs can get all the exercise they need in a one bedroom apartment --- but they still need to be walked at least twice a day to take care of their biological functions.

Do you have very small children?

Sometimes younger children are a little rough with their pets; they'll want to carry them around and squeeze them and play dress up and expect full cooperation from the dog. Some dogs have the 'laid back' temperament that allows them to tolerate these things; some breeds even seem to thrive on the attention. There are some small breeds, however, that are too delicate to be handled as roughly as children are likely to handle them, some breeds of all sizes that just don't enjoy being picked up and

carried around or being hugged and other larger dogs that have both the patience and the temperament for life around small children, but are also large enough that they might unintentionally hurt a small child. Any dog under 7 lbs is not suitable for children under five. Any dog 10 lbs and over are usually suitable for all ages.

Do you have room in your budget for a dog?

Dogs have needs just as people do --- adding a dog to your family will add expenses. Some of these are: the initial purchase of the dog; the shots that are required by the city or county where you live; the grooming needs such as brushes, shampoo and etc.; professional obedience training is required for some dogs; of course every dog needs food --- the bigger the dog, the bigger the food budget; don't forget water and food dishes and collars and leashes; and, as the dog ages, there are sure to be some additional medical expenses. Some medical expenses will be necessary just because of the breed, for example, big dogs have a tendency to develop hip and bone problems just because of their size and some smaller breeds, especially the ones with the short muzzles and large eyes, develop eye problems and respiratory problems.

Are you ready to do some research?

Obviously, the "Considering All The Factors" method of selecting the family dog will require some research. There are many books in the library, many Internet resources and many experts (breeders, pet shop owners, etc.) that can make your selection process easier.

In the end, however, any choice will be a gamble. Every dog is an individual and the 'breed characteristics' you get from your research will only be guidelines. And in the end you may select the family dog by using one of the other selection methods mentioned before or you may have some other criteria but hopefully the information presented here has helped you understand that owning a dog is more than just buying a dog. Owning a dog is a responsibility and a commitment.

Steve Allison is a third generation of professional dog breeders along with his brother Gary. It all

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started with his grandparents in 1970 with the Boston Terriers and has expanded to Maltese, Yorkshire Terriers, Pugs, Shih Tzu's and Pomeranians. He is also actively involved with dog rescue and has a website that showcases the puppies they occasionally has for sale at

All My Puppies Online

Steve is

also the co–author of two consumer guides,

Carpet Secrets

and

Moving Secrets Guide

How To Choose A Dog Trainer

By Chris Geldof

With so many dog trainers out there, it can be hard trying to choose the best one for your dog. Trying to determine which dog trainer is the best qualified to train your dog can be a difficult task.

The American Dog Trainers Network recommends the following criteria for choosing a dog trainer for your dog:

Reputation: Recommendations from your vet, other reputable trainers, friends that have had their dogs trained, etc. can help a lot in deciding which trainer to go with.

Experience: You should look into each potential trainer's background before deciding on your dog's trainer. Years of experience and areas of expertise are just a couple of things to look for. A good, professional dog trainer won't hesitate to answer your questions, so be prepared to ask a lot of them. Afterall, your dog is part of your family.

Training methodology: Reputable dog trainers care about every dog's welfare. They will know that harsh or abusive handling methods are counter–productive and not good for the dog in general.

Love for dogs: The best dog trainers have a general love for dogs, or they wouldn't and shouldn't be involved in that line of work. You'll know a great trainer by his or her joy of living and working with dogs.

Extensive behavioral knowledge: Dedicated trainers keep up–to–date on all of the latest training methods by attending dog training and animal behavioral courses, conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. whenever possible. Make sure you inquire about any recent educational courses that the trainer has attended.

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Teaching and communication skills: Dog trainers that have good teaching and communication skills make the learning process easier, quicker and more enjoyable for the dogs.

Affiliation with reputable organizations: You can always tell a good dog trainer by the organizations, associations and clubs that he or she is affiliated with.

Ethics or profit?: You should find out what motivates a potential dog trainer. Is he or she in it strictly for the money, or for their love of dogs?

Unless a dog trainer comes recommended by one or more reputable source, it really is a case of buyer beware. Anyone can call themselves a dog trainer. Do your homework when choosing a dog trainer for your dog. Your dog is part of your family, so you should put as much effort into choosing a trainer as you would in choosing your dentist. The wrong kind of training could damage your dog for life.

Chris Geldof is a dog lover and owns a dog-related website. Visit

<http://www.easy-dog-training-tips.com>

for more information on dog obedience and dog training.



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