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How to Select the Best Dog for Children

By Shannon Emmanuel

Are you preparing to bring a dog home to your children? Did your neighbor tell you they have free puppies, all you have to do is come over and choose one? Or did your children see an adorable puppy in the pet store and are now begging you to let them bring it home? How do you select the best dog breed for children? Does it matter?

Since having a dog is such a common thing, do you really need to know anything more than how much it costs?

Well, how did you choose your car, or your home? Did you consider the cost, safety and suitability for your family? Of course you did. If you heard stories of a particular car that was susceptible to causing accidents or that a neighborhood was known for its rough occupants you would find something that was safer.

If the car or home was too expensive to maintain, it would impact your decision, as would the size of the vehicle or how many bedrooms the house had.

However, many people bring home a dog that they have spent no more time in choosing than selecting oranges at the grocery store. Although we hear stories of dogs attacking children and perhaps know of people who got rid of dogs after they grew too large for the apartment or destroyed property, as a group, parents still choose to bring dogs into their families with little instruction or research.

The truth is, most families with a dog will never deal with the terrible situations we hear about on the news. Dogs love people. Most dogs love children. Children and adults love dogs and it is very doubtful that after thousands of years the connection between canine and humankind will be broken.

What does need to be considered is how to make the best possible environment for your children and dog so that you don't need to worry about unexpected tragedy or the sad disappointment of giving your children's pet away.

How to Select the Best Dog for Children

There are many experts with various views, but several points can be generally agreed upon when choosing a dog for your family.

Find a dog that is good with children.

Don't all dogs love children? The answer is simple - NO. Some breeds, and even individuals within a breed, are more or less tolerant of children and the rough handling that usually ensues. Selecting a breed that enjoys the rambunctious atmosphere of a family home will go far in ensuring that the children have a willing playmate and the dog is happy.

Choose a dog that is the right size or energy level.

Do you live in an apartment? Do you have a large, fenced yard? Considering the size of home or yard you have should influence your choice of dog. Some breeds are naturally larger than others. Some

smaller breeds (like Jack Russell Terriers) are small but have an enormous amount of energy that can be difficult to control in a small home.

Decide on a trained or untrained dog.

Perhaps you plan to train the dog yourself. You may choose a puppy so the children participate in the training process. But how much do you know about training dogs? Are you ready for the hassles of housebreaking and obedience training? Perhaps selecting an older, trained dog might suit your family better.

The decisions you make before bringing your dog home and selecting the best dog breed for children will help your family enjoy their new pet for a very long time.

Shannon Emmanuel is a freelance writer and is the author of 'How to Select the Best Dog or Puppy for Children'. Find out more about raising a safe family dog at

<http://www.best-dog-breed-for-children.com>

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

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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?

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.

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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 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

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