



THE SUITABLE PET FOR YOU!

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Getting ready to add a puppy or adopted dog to the family? To choose your best friend and new family member, begin by knowing yourself and your family's lifestyle.

Choosing a pet that suits your lifestyle and personality is the key to a successful relationship. Before you bring any new addition into your life, do your homework. Think carefully about how you live and who you are. Unlike relationships with humans, this one requires that you alone predict the possible outcome far in advance with socialization, appropriate training, veterinary care, love, and, in some cases, months or years of rehabilitation for a sick adopted dog.

EXAMINE THE PURELY PRACTICAL

What sort of dog fits into your budget (nutrition and veterinary costs), quality time allowance (exercise and play), health limitations (yours or the dog's) and grooming?

Now, dig a little deeper. Are you a nurturer who thrives on affection? Do you prefer a spirited rascal or a regal companion? Do you enjoy sports or being a couch potato? Do you like being around independent thinkers? Are you looking for blind obedience? Do you like indulging your pet? Are you a blended personality who happily can mix right and left-brain qualities successfully? Are you good at long-term-relationships or do you prefer dating?

SOURCES

In addition to Internet sites, there are books and videos that can lead you to over 400 dog breeds worldwide. There are shelters, adoption, rescue agencies and breeders who can share their experience with specific breeds. Be picky and choosy. Listen, ask questions, but let me repeat, be picky and choosy. While engaging in conversation, don't get caught up in the excitement of the moment while an over-zealous person suggests a breed or adoption that you know in your heart-of-hearts may not be your best choice. If they are anxious or make you feel "you must or the dog will be put to sleep" then this is NOT the place to get a dog.

THE HEART COUNTS

I have had countless clients ask themselves "whatever made me think that I could be the guardian of a German Shepherd as my first dog"? A German Shepherd (and many other breeds and crosses) is like trying to learn how to drive with a high-powered Maserati. Sure, it can be a learning experience, but numbers of dogs relinquished to shelters clearly sends the message that too many people get caught off-balance and under informed.

Another scenario: "I had 4 dogs, but I didn't want them to put this dog to sleep, so I took him. Now my dogs are all fighting." Honor what's in your heart, but don't allow it to take precedence over common sense. Impulsive and/or altruistic decisions can create more stress and sadness for you and the dog (that needs to be returned to languish away waiting for yet another home).

It takes patience, love and understanding to rehabilitate a confused and frightened dog. Adding a new dog, either to an already existing dog home (multiple dogs) can work, but it isn't for the weak at heart. You need a determined commitment to allow time for the dogs and family to evolve and relax into their living situation. Dogs need to find their places in their human and their dog pack. Boundaries and limitations need to be set and adhered to for the family and the dogs! In some cases, you may have to face the fact that you will have two dogs in, two dogs out, two dogs upstairs, two dogs downstairs. Will little children have the stamina and energy to keep these boundaries safe?

LET ME ASK MY GURU

Your guru doesn't know. An experienced mentor might (dog owner, breeder, Vet). The decision is personal and inside of you. Knowing in advance what sort of pet you want (it doesn't have to be a dog either) will give domestic harmony its greatest chance. Seeking, then siphoning through information will give you knowledge. Knowledge will empower you with the opportunity to make wise decisions.

Listen to your heart and wisdom, after doing your homework. Do not make impulsive decisions. A huge number of beautiful dogs (mixed and purebred) are relinquished every year to the shelters. The largest reason is lack of housetraining, with dogs being 3 years old and under. That message blasts loud and clear. Know the breed and/or spend time with the adopted pet you intend to adopt.

At shelters, rescue organizations or foster care, be mindful of the volunteer who has a BIG HEART, but no common sense or behavioral experience. Dogs who are dropped off one day should not be placed the next and definitely not until they are thoroughly assessed. They require a thorough health check and observed in a variety of family like situations for days, weeks and preferably a few months. There are a few exceptions like well-trained family dogs that suddenly lose their owners to death or tragedy.

A LIFELONG COMMITMENT

Sharing a life with a dog(s) is a responsibility and a gift that has many rewards. While you are searching for the best pet, it is always a good idea to add to the end of every thought "and this is going to be a lifelong commitment". *Warm Woofs & Wags!*