

# Selecting a New Puppy

- Before choosing a puppy, it's important to research dog breeds to find one that fits into your lifestyle.
- A healthy puppy should be bright and alert, without signs of coughing, sneezing, or lethargy.
- A puppy should have good social skills with its littermates and with people of all ages.
- Puppies that are loners or show signs of dominance or aggression may be challenging to train.

### What Should I Consider Before Getting a Puppy?

While a puppy can tug at anyone's heartstrings, choosing a puppy should be more than an emotional decision. All too often, the cute and cuddly puppy that is purchased on impulse is relinquished to a shelter because it grew up to be a large, rambunctious dog. That's why it pays to do your homework before you even look at a puppy.

Start by researching the kind of adult dog that will be most compatible with your lifestyle. A book on dog breeds is a good starting place, but also ask veterinarians for their suggestions. They are very familiar with the different dog breeds and suitability for each home. You can also visit dog shows to see many different breeds at once and talk with dog breeders and trainers.

Consider the size of the adult dog and how it would fit into your household. Would you prefer a lap dog or do you have room for a large dog? Research the exercise and grooming requirements of different breeds. Some breeds, such as herding dogs, require more exercise and may be best suited for someone who is looking for a jogging partner. Other breeds need regular grooming, so you will need to plan for those expenses.

Some breeds may be predisposed to certain health conditions. In some cases, you may ask the breeder to test for the condition, if possible, or provide a written guarantee should the condition occur. Mixed-breed dogs may be less likely to have certain health conditions than purebred dogs.

### Where Should I Look for a Puppy?

If you prefer a purebred dog, ask veterinarians and breed clubs for advice on how to locate a reputable breeder. You'll want to interview several breeders and ask to see the puppy's parents and the breeding facility, if possible. It is important to visit the facility to ensure that a limited number of puppies are raised in a sanitary, well-socialized environment. When buying a purebred dog, it's worth the effort to find a reputable breeder.

Unfortunately, there are many puppy mills that sell poorly socialized puppies that may develop health and behavior problems over time. These puppies are often sold at pet stores and become ill, requiring costly treatment. Buying a puppy from a pet store also limits your knowledge of the puppy's initial living conditions, and you cannot see the puppy's parents to ensure they are in good health and well socialized.

Shelters and rescue organizations offer both purebred and mixed-breed puppies. You may not have the benefit of knowing the puppy's background, so

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there are no guarantees about potential health or behavior problems. But if you choose your puppy carefully and are willing to work on training, you may find a suitable companion and get the satisfaction of giving a puppy a second chance at a great life.

### How Do I Check a Puppy's Physical Health?

Most breeders and some shelters will provide you with paperwork that the puppy has been examined by a veterinarian, has been checked/treated for parasites, and has received at least the first round of vaccines. Many breeders may also provide you with a health guarantee.

## Choices and Considerations

A healthy puppy should:

- Appear alert and energetic, not lethargic (tired)
- Be well fed, with a little fat covering the ribcage
- Have a good coat, without dry, flaky skin or bald patches
- Walk and run normally, without limping
- Have no discharge from the eyes, nose, or ears
- Follow a tossed toy with its eyes
- Not cough, sneeze, or appear to have difficulty breathing
- Turn to look at you when you clap or make a noise behind it

### How Do I Determine a Puppy's Personality?

Start by observing how the puppy interacts with its littermates. As long as a puppy shows an interest in playing and eases off when other puppies yelp to indicate it is being too aggressive, it will most likely grow up to get along with other dogs. Puppies that are loners and prefer to keep to themselves may have problems interacting with other dogs later in life.

Next, see how the puppy engages with people. Ideally, observe the puppy with people of both sexes, as well as people of different ages. You will want a puppy that is curious and interested in people. Puppies that cower or urinate in fear or that run away from people may be poorly socialized and difficult to train.

When you roll the puppy over on its back and hold it there for a minute, you are testing the puppy's willingness to be submissive. Puppies that struggle excessively or become aggressive may have dominance issues. A well-socialized puppy may wiggle a bit but will eventually relax and let you hold it in this position.

Puppies should be comfortable when handled. Try holding the puppy and touching the ears, mouth, and paws. If the puppy becomes aggressive or struggles to get away, it might not be the kind of dog who will snuggle with you on the couch or allow you to trim its nails. Choosing a healthy puppy with a good disposition will increase your chances of raising a dog that will be a great fit for your household and your best friend for years to come!