

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU

This questionnaire will help you understand and think about the various issues involved in owning a dog – there are no right or wrong answers. The questionnaire is designed to make you aware of your needs. Some responses will have a comment at the bottom of the question – this is simply designed to point out important information. You will still need to assess your overall needs to make a good decision.

Although we're all tempted to choose a dog based on emotion, we usually have much better luck if we understand what kind of dog will fit with our lifestyle. Take this questionnaire and make a list of the things that pop out at you – use that list when you are actually researching and looking for your dog. If you go to a shelter or rescue organization, talk to them about what you've discovered about yourself and your needs BEFORE looking at the dogs. If you are not sure what kind of dog you want, you should probably stick with the fairly well-known breeds. Lesser-known breeds are not common for a reason – often they are still a working dog and not suitable to be a pet, or they are difficult to handle and best owned by an experienced handler.

Be very cautious about getting the latest “fad” dog. These dogs are very often poorly bred by people cashing in on the craze; the breeders have no knowledge or interest in the breed, may treat their breeding dogs badly, probably don't socialize the pups and breed in both physical and temperamental faults. If you decide you want a purebred dog, please read about how to choose a good breeder. And be extremely cautious about buying a dog from a pet store. This is not recommended – not only do you not know where these pups come from, but often the store employees don't either (no matter what they've been told). Further, pet stores are where puppy mills sell their pups. This doesn't mean all pet stores sell puppy-mill puppies, but there's a better than even chance that they do. From a societal standpoint, if we continue to buy those pups, puppy mills will continue to operate. From a practical stand-

point, you can't afford a puppy mill dog – they are notoriously poorly bred and in-bred with severe physical problems.

If you decide to get a dog from a shelter or rescue group, hurrah for you! You can get an absolutely wonderful dog from a shelter, and these dogs need homes. Keep in mind your requirements and don't just “fall in love” with a particular dog. Obviously you want to have an emotional attachment with the dog you choose, but there are hundreds of dogs out there that need to be rescued, and you're bound to fall in love with more than just one!

If you go with a rescue group, you can be pretty sure that the dog you get will be the breed the group rescues, or at least a mixed breed with a significant amount of the primary breed. Your local shelter should have a list of rescue groups, or you can usually get the name of a group close to you from the national breed club. Just start doing your Internet research and you shouldn't have any trouble finding them. Keep in mind that most people who do breed rescue are sincere dog lovers; however, many of them do not know a lot about dog behavior. Additionally, many rescues will not euthanize a dog for any reason – including aggression. Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions – such as: has the dog ever bitten; does he guard food or toys; how does he get along with other dogs; does he do well with children; etc. Be very picky about the dog you select. Don't get talked into taking a dog when your gut tells you it's not a good idea – trust your gut!

If acquiring a dog from a shelter, don't just assume that because the shelter is calling the dog a Lab-x (Labrador Retriever mixed breed) that it's true. You never know who is deciding what breed a dog is; it could be animal control, the vet techs, the primary care people, etc. They may or may not know what breed the dog



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU

is and once it's in the computer, it's unlikely to change. In addition, be aware that it can be very difficult to categorize puppies unless you've seen the parents. Also, many shelters are shying away from labeling dogs as certain breeds such as Pit Bulls, Rottweilers, etc. Any black dog is likely to be called a Lab-x – but it could just as easily be a Pit Bull-x. Pit Bulls are wonderful dogs, but they are not Labs, and you need to know this going in.

Questionnaire:

### 1. How many adults, including yourself live in your household?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5 or more

**If answer = D or E:** When there are several adults in a household, it is often a “roommate” situation. Be sure that you have discussed your intentions with all your roommates and that they are agreeable to having a dog in the household. Also remember that you will need their cooperation when training your dog; someone has to set the rules and everyone else has to agree to follow them. If this is not done, it is not fair to the dog – you'll be sending a lot of mixed messages. Finally, don't get a shy or aloof breed of dog; there is more than likely a lot of action in a household with several adults and you need a gregarious and outgoing breed.

### 2. Of the adults in the family, how many work outside the home?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5 or more

**All answers:** If all the adults work out of the home, be sure you will have the time to properly socialize, exercise, train and groom your dog.

### 3. Of the adults in the family, how many travel for work purposes?

- A. 0
- B. 1
- C. 2
- D. 3
- E. 4 or more

**All answers:** Be aware that a lot of travel usually means the added expense of boarding your dog. Also, you should spend the time to find a good boarding kennel. Just as you wouldn't leave your child with someone you found from the yellow pages unless you thoroughly checked them out, you should not leave your dog with someone without first checking out their facility, philosophy and reputation.

### 4. How many children, including yourself, live in your household?

- A. 0
- B. 1
- C. 2
- D. 3
- E. 4 or more

### 5. If you have children, how old is your youngest child?

- A. Less than one year
- B. Less than four years
- C. Less than 8 years
- D. Less than 10 years

**If answer = A, B or C:** If you have a young child, you probably shouldn't be considering a dog at this time. You have more than enough to occupy your time taking care of your child. Although most of us have an idealized vision of dogs and children, it is an ideal and often very misconceived. Dogs and young children do not necessarily get along. It's generally not a good idea to get a dog until your youngest child is at least six years, preferably eight. Young children can be very hard on dogs – pulling their hair,



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU

tails and ears, poking them, hitting them, etc. If your dog does not have a very forgiving temperament or is not used to children, he may not be willing to take such abuse from a child and this can lead to problems.

**6. If you have children, what is the average number of hours each child spends in extra-curricular activities each week?**

- A. 1-3
- B. 4-6
- C. 7-9
- D. 10 or more

**If answer B, C or D:** In today's busy urban world, it seems our children are so busy with extra-curricular activities that there's hardly time to sit down to a meal together. Be sure that your family will have the time to spend with a dog. This varies by breed, but every dog needs a minimum of 30 minutes a day of exercise, not to mention grooming, feeding, and other day-to-day necessities. In addition, dogs are social animals – they need to spend time with the family; it is crucial to their good mental health.

**7. In total (including weekends, overnights, etc.) how many weeks a year will the entire family be away from home?**

- A. 0
- B. 1-2
- C. 2-4
- D. 5 or more

**If answer C or D:** See #3

**8. How many dogs currently live in your household?**

- A. 0
- B. 1
- C. 2
- D. 3
- E. 4 or more

**If answer B, C, D or E:** There are many things to consider when adding another dog to your household.

Often, owners think they should get another dog as a companion for their current dog; this may or may not be a wise decision. If you are having behavior or obedience problems with your current dog, you should not consider getting another dog until those issues are under control. Adding another dog will not necessarily solve your problems – in fact, it's very likely to add additional problems. Be aware that you will be doubling your expenses with another dog – food, vet bills, grooming, boarding, etc. Also, you may end up with behavior problems you didn't count on when adding another dog to the household. Here are some things to consider when thinking about getting another dog:

- The most common dogfights occur between unfamiliar males;
- The second most common dogfights occur between familiar females (females who live together).
- If you decide to add another dog to the household, and choose a puppy, you need to separate the puppy from the other dog(s) for most of the day. Otherwise the puppy will become very bonded to the other dog(s) and not bonded to its human family.
- Try to have at least a six month difference in the ages of dogs in your household.
- It sometimes works very well to get a young dog as a companion for an older dog. It can add new activity and vigor to the older dog's life. However, there may also be problems such as jealousy to contend with.

**9. Of the dogs currently living in your household, what is the age of the oldest dog?**

- A. 3-6 months
- B. 7-12 months
- C. 12-24 months
- D. 2-8 years
- E. 8 years or older

**See #8**



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU

**10. Of the dogs currently living in your household, what is the age of the youngest dog?**

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- E. 8 years or older

**See #8**

**11. Do you have cats?**

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer = A:** If you currently have a cat in your household it is your responsibility to protect your cat. Be very aware of the breed of dog you choose. Some dogs have a very high predatory instinct, and they are not good dogs to have around cats. Be very careful about getting a Sight Hound, a dog from the herding group or a dog from the Terrier group. If you are bringing an adolescent or adult dog into your household, test the dog around a dog-savvy cat first. Most shelters have some means of testing dogs around cats before adoption. Do your homework before bringing a dog into the household – remember, the cat is already a member of your household and deserves to be able to live a peaceful and reasonably uneventful life.

**12. Where do you live?**

- A. Apartment
- B. Townhouse/Condo
- C. House
- D. Farm
- E. Mobile Home
- F. Mobile Home Park
- G. Other

**If answer = A, B, E or F:** Be sure you choose a dog that will be able to live comfortably in a limited space and/or does not need a back yard. There are many dogs fitting this description, both large and small; however, you do need to do your research. If you live in an apartment or in a situation where you have a very small yard, you must be committed to exercising your dog daily.

Regular exercise will prevent many behavior problems.

**13. Do you have a yard?**

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer = B:** See #12

**14. Approximately how many square feet is your yard?**

- A. 100-500 (very small)
- B. 501-1000 (small)
- C. 1001-3000 (average)
- D. 3001-5000 (good-sized)
- E. 5000 or more (large)

**If answer = A, B or C:** See #12

**15. Is your yard fenced?**

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer = B:** It is not good to allow dogs to run free, and in most areas it is against the law. Dogs, like teenagers, can make very bad choices, hook up with undesirable companions, and get in lots of trouble. If you do not have a fenced yard you must be willing to take your dog for regular exercise.

**16. Do you:**

- A. Rent
- B. Own

**If answer = A:** If you rent, be aware that you will probably move more than once during your dog's lifetime. You must be willing to take the time to find a new home that will allow pets.

**17. Do you foresee moving within the next 2 years?**

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer = A:** See #16



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU

### 18. If you are planning on moving, will it be to:

- A. An apartment
- B. A townhouse/condo
- C. A house
- D. A farm
- E. A mobile home
- F. A mobile home park
- G. Other

**If answer = A, B, E or F:** See #12

### 19. Would you describe your life as:

- A. Active
- B. Home Oriented
- C. Busy
- D. Sedentary
- E. Outdoorsy

**If answer = A or C:** Be sure you have time for a dog. People who lead busy, active lives are usually engaged in activities that are not conducive to dogs. Think about how you spend your time and make sure you have time for a dog.

**If answer = E:** What more could a dog ask for than an outdoorsy owner? However, be sure your outdoor activities can include a dog. For instance, if you spend a lot of time in nature preserves, dogs are not going to be allowed. If you jump out of airplanes or scuba dive, that probably isn't a great dog activity. However, running, hiking, camping, even river-rafting can be great dog activities. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't have a dog just because you like to jump out of airplanes – just be sure you do the other activities also. Also be sure you choose a dog with an appropriate activity level for you – for instance, if you love to jog, a Bulldog probably isn't a good choice, whereas a Border Collie will be an excellent running companion.

**If answer = B or D:** There are great dogs for couch potatoes! And also for people who aren't athletic or prefer spending their time at home. Just be sure that's what you get. If you are not willing to take your dog for walks, to the park and to the lake or river for a swim, you don't want

an active dog like a Labrador or Golden Retriever. A Bulldog, or a smaller companion dog may suit you much better. Also, consider getting an older dog – they don't need as much exercise and are much less likely to be adopted from a shelter or rescue.

### 20. What leisure activities do you participate in?

(Check all that apply.)

- A. Walking
- B. Reading
- C. Jogging
- D. Cooking
- E. Hiking
- F. Gardening
- G. Bicycling
- H. Home improvement
- I. Organized sports
- J. Internet
- K. TV
- L. Movies
- M. Theater
- N. Playing games
- O. Children's activities
- P. Entertaining
- Q. Shopping
- R. Dating

**All answers:** Regardless of the activities you prefer, make sure you have time for a dog. If your preferred activities include being away from home, be sure you will be home often enough to give your dog the time and attention he needs or that you can include your dog in the activities. If you prefer quiet activities be sure to get a dog that doesn't require a lot of physical exercise and who will enjoy just hanging out with you. Activities such as organized sports do not make room for dogs – however if you enjoy organized sports, there are plenty of dog sports out there that you and your dog can participate in.



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU

**21. If you are an “empty nester,” will you have grandchildren visiting?**

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer = A:** You need to be very aware of your dog when the child is visiting, if the child is younger than 12-14 years. Never leave the dog and a child under the age of 10 alone. Be aware that dogs that are not regularly exposed to children are often aggressive toward them. If you get a dog as a puppy, be sure to expose him to lots of children of different ages; if you get an adolescent or adult dog, be sure to watch carefully when he is around children. Also be sure to not leave valuable toys, raw-hides and food around when the dog and children are together.

**22. Do you enjoy pampering and/or grooming yourself?**

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer = B:** If you do not enjoy the grooming process, be sure to get a low-maintenance dog. You won't want a dog with long hair, a lot of wrinkles or other characteristics that require a lot of grooming.

**23. Do you enjoy pampering and/or grooming your child(ren)?**

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer = B:** See #22.

**24. Do you foresee any changes in your life within the next 2 years (addition of family member, divorce, move, etc.)?**

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer = A:** Be aware that major changes affect dogs as well as people. If a new person moves into the house, or a familiar person leaves, it can be very stressful to the dog and you may experience some behavioral problems.

If this happens, be prepared both mentally and monetarily to consult a good behavior counselor. If you know in advance that there will be major changes, try to prepare your dog before it actually happens, rather than waiting until after the fact.

**25. Why do you want a dog?**

- A. Companion for yourself
- B. Companion for your children
- C. Companion for other pets
- D. Watch dog
- E. To show or compete in sports
- F. To breed

**If answer = B:** See #5

**If answer = C:** If you want a dog as a companion to your other pets, be very sure that this is the answer to your problems. See #6

**If answer = D:** Almost all dogs will act as a good watch dog. However, they should still be a part of the family; dogs are social animals and need to be a part of a group. Almost any dog will warn you if they detect an intruder. In today's world you certainly do not want a trained attack dog – the liability issues are huge! What you really need is a nice, friendly dog who'll let you know if there is an intruder – and most dogs will let you know.

**If answer = E:** Competition is a wonderful reason to own a dog, as long as the dog is still part of the family. Most dogs enjoy competition – it's like their job. However, to have a truly happy dog he needs to be a family member.

**If answer = F:** If you are taking this test, you probably are not ready to breed dogs. A good breeder loves the dog and the breed he or she is breeding, and, generally speaking, breeding is not a money-making proposition. It is very expensive and takes extensive knowledge.



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU

Please do your research thoroughly before starting a breeding program.

### 26. If you get a female, do you plan to breed her?

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer = A:** See #25F

### 27. What type of looks do you prefer in a dog? (Pick all that apply.)

- A. Lassie
- B. Benji
- C. Hooch (Turner & Hooch)
- D. Skip (My Dog Skip – also played Eddie on Frasier)
- E. Rin Tin Tin
- F. The Hush Puppy

**All answers:** Be aware that movie dogs are highly trained dogs – they did not just come this way. If you love a dog because of his or her movie persona you need to really research the breed before getting one. A dog such as Hooch or Skip can, in real life, be a very difficult dog, even though the movies portray them as next to perfect.

**If answer = A:** Lassie is a beautiful dog; however she requires extensive grooming. If you enjoy the grooming process a dog like this is wonderful, but be prepared to brush the dog at least daily, possibly more. Also be aware that Lassie is a herding dog. These dogs require a lot of physical and mental exercise and if they don't get it they can develop serious behavior problems.

**If answer = B:** Benji is adorable, but is a dog that requires a fair amount of grooming. Take, for instance, the beautiful models in fashion magazines who look tousled and casual – this look takes a lot of time. Most dogs that look like Benji aren't cute – they're a mess! Their fur gets matted and full of junk, you need to trim around their face and often other areas.

**If answer = C:** Most people probably don't even know what kind of a dog Hooch is. He's a French Mastiff and can be a very difficult dog – especially for novice owners. He is a big dog (often as much as 100 lbs.) and will often deliberately try to intimidate strangers. Although for the most part he's easy to groom, he does some high-level drooling!

**If answer = D:** Skip is a Jack Russell Terrier – one of the most difficult dogs around. They are very smart and active and have an extremely high prey drive. If you are not an experienced dog owner, this is not the dog for you.

**If answer = E:** Rin Tin Tin is a German Shepherd Dog and was originally a war dog. Although highly trained, your average war dog would not make a good pet. However, German Shepherd Dogs do make excellent pets. They are very sensitive and can be extremely wary of strangers and strange dogs. These dogs require a lot of socializing.

**If answer = F:** The Hush Puppy is a Basset Hound. Absolutely adorable dogs – but extremely single-minded. Once they get on a scent, there's very little you can do. Hounds are bred to follow scents and that's what they love to do more than anything else. Bassets also howl. They have lots of physical problems because of their short legs and long back. They can make excellent pets, but need a lot of training.

**All answers:** The undesirable traits in these famous dogs have been pointed out because it's important to be very aware that dogs in the movies and on TV are not your average dog. All dogs have both desirable and undesirable traits. Most of them can be good pets – just do your research and don't get a dog because the kids fell in love with him on a TV show. Every time *101 Dalmatians* is re-released the local



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU

animal shelters are swamped with Dalmatians that people thought they had to have but found out they didn't really want or understand. To add to the problem, because Dalmatians have these spurts of high popularity, unscrupulous breeders take advantage of the fad and breed dogs that a reputable breeder would never breed; this means you can get both physical and behavioral problems that a well-bred dog wouldn't have.

### 28. What size dog do you want?

- A. Less than 10 pounds
- B. Between 10 and 25 pounds
- C. Between 25 and 40 pounds
- D. Between 40 and 75 pounds
- E. Over 75 pounds

### 29. How do you envision your dog interacting in your life? (Choose all that apply.)

- A. Someone to jog/walk with
- B. A companion to lay quietly by your feet as you gaze into the fire and/or read a good book
- C. Someone to play with your children
- D. Someone to play with your current dog
- E. Someone to run errands with you
- F. Someone to participate in sporting activities with you.

### 30. How much time are you willing to devote to grooming a dog per week (in minutes)?

- A. 15
- B. 30
- C. 60
- D. 90
- E. 150
- F. 200 or more

### 31. Does anyone in your family have allergies?

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer = A:** There are many dogs that don't shed; however, be aware that it isn't the dog's hair that aggravates allergies – it's the dander. Dog's who don't shed appear to be better for people with allergies, but they may still create problems.

### 32. How much can you afford to spend on each dog you own for food, medical care, registration, boarding, training, activities and grooming yearly?

- A. \$100
- B. \$300
- C. \$600
- D. \$1,000

**If answer = A or B:** \$300 dollars or less per year is the bare minimum you can expect to spend on a dog. This assumes it is a smaller dog who doesn't eat a lot of food, is a dog that doesn't need professional grooming, that the dog is healthy and doesn't need extra veterinary care and that you don't travel a lot or intend to participate in many dog sports or activities. If you can't afford or don't want to spend more than \$300 per year on your dog you might reconsider getting a dog – they can be expensive, especially as they get older.

### 33. If you had to give up your dog for some reason, what would you do with him?

- A. Give him to the Humane Society or local dog shelter
- B. Return him to the breeder
- C. Put an ad in the paper to find a home
- D. Find a friend willing to take him
- E. Abandon him

### 34. Which member of the household will be responsible for your dog?

- A. Self
- B. Spouse
- C. Another adult
- D. Teenager
- E. Child under the age of 10

**If answer = D or E:** Don't ever go into the process of acquiring a pet thinking that the children will be responsible. Sometimes they are but more often than not, they lose interest after a short while and the responsibility falls back on the parents. Also at some point the children are



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU

going to grow up and leave the house. When this happens the dog usually remains with the parents. If you, as a parent, are not willing to take on the responsibility for a pet, DON'T GET ONE!

### 35. Have you owned a dog or dogs before?

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer = B:** If you've never owned a dog before, take the time to find an easy dog. You might even consider getting an older dog who has been housetrained and learned basic manners already. Without a doubt you will want to plan on taking obedience lessons – this will help give you the information and skills you need to own a dog. If you had a dog as a child remember that your parents went through the agonies of puppyhood and adolescence – all you were required to do was play with and enjoy the finished product!

### 36. If you have previously owned a dog, who was the primary caretaker of the dog(s)?

- A. Yourself
- B. Your Parents
- C. Another adult
- D. Another child

**If answer = B, C or D:** If you have never been the primary caretaker of a dog before, you should consider that you have not actually owned a dog. See #35B

### 37. Have you ever obedience-trained a dog?

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer = B:** If you've never obedience trained a dog, it's highly recommend that you take some lessons. Your relationship with your dog will be much better if you understand how best to interact with him.

### 38. Do you plan to obedience-train this dog?

- A. Yes
- B. No

**If answer is B:** It is always wise to have an obedience-trained dog – even a lap dog or companion dog should have basic obedience. You never know when your dog might get away from you, and if you don't have a recall, he could be lost forever or run into traffic.

### 39. If so, what method will you use:

- A. You will train the dog yourself
- B. You will take the dog to a group class
- C. You will have private obedience lessons
- D. You will send the dog out for training

**If answer = A:** Unless you are an experienced dog owner you should consider going to a group class and taking lessons; they are fun and informative and you will learn the skills you need to live with your new dog.

**If answer = D:** Although this is often an effective way of training a dog, you will create a stronger bond with your dog by training him yourself. Also just because your dog will obey the trainer does not necessarily mean he will obey you. If you don't have the time to work with your dog you should reconsider acquiring a dog at this time.

### 40. If you have behavior problems with your dog, what will you do:

- A. Give him to the Humane Society or local dog shelter
- B. Return him to the breeder
- C. Put an ad in the paper to find a home
- D. Find a friend willing to take him
- E. Talk to your veterinarian
- F. Find a behavior counselor

**If answer = A, B, C, D:** Be aware that most dog problems can be resolved. Before giving up your dog, consult a behavior counselor. Don't wait until the problems are unbearable – get help as soon as you perceive that there is a problem. The sooner you address it the sooner



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU

it will be resolved – if you wait, it will only get worse.

### 41. Where will your dog spend the night?

- A. In the back yard
- B. In a kennel outside
- C. Loose outside
- D. In the house
- E. In a crate outside
- F. In a crate inside
- G. In your bed

**If answer = A, B, C, E:** Most dogs are happiest in the house with their owners. Some dogs do well outside, but you need to research and find which dogs these are.

### 42. Where will your dog spend most of his day?

- A. In the back yard
- B. In a kennel outside
- C. Loose outside
- D. In the house
- E. In a crate outside
- F. In a crate inside
- G. In a particular room inside

See #41

NOTES:

