

Schedule a veterinary examination to assess the health of your new companion as soon as possible to ensure it receives the appropriate vaccinations and any needed health care. If you have medical information from your dog's original owner, including its vaccination and deworming history, be sure to take this information with you on your first visit to your veterinarian.

Not only is your veterinarian best qualified to evaluate the health of your new companion, but he/she can advise you about proper immunization, parasite control, nutrition, sterilization, socialization, training, grooming and other care that may be necessary to protect the health of your new pet.

If you choose a puppy, be prepared for several weeks to months of housetraining and some initial medical expenses for wellness exams, vaccinations and neutering. Plan your puppy's arrival when there is sufficient time to socialize and housetrain him or her. If your community offers puppy classes, they are a great way to socialize your new companion and for both of you to learn some basic commands. Frequent, positive contact with people and other dogs early in the puppy's life enhances its future interactions with your family, other people, and their dogs.

Any dog can become bored and potentially destructive if left alone all day without an outlet for its exercise, exploratory, and social needs. Therefore, set aside time each day for activities that are fun for you and your dog such as walking, playing, petting, grooming, etc. Remember that dogs are highly social creatures, and isolating a dog to the backyard or an area of the home with no interaction is one of the worst things you can do.

### WHEN YOU ACQUIRE A PET

You accept responsibility for the health and welfare of another living thing. You are also responsible for your pet's impact on your family, friends, and community. A pet will be part of your life for many years. Invest the time and effort necessary to make your years together happy ones. When you choose a pet, you are promising to care for it for its entire life. Choose wisely, keep your promise, and enjoy one of life's most rewarding experiences!



## — PUPPY TIPS —

- Six to 10 weeks is considered an ideal age for a puppy to move to a new home.
- Preventing unplanned litters is an important part of responsible pet ownership. Talk to your veterinarian about the best time to have your puppy spayed or neutered.
- When possible, meet the puppy's parents—their temperaments are often good indicators of what the puppy's temperament will be.
- If you are getting a puppy as a second pet, remember that some older pets may be less tolerant of a puppy's behavior. Ask your veterinarian or dog trainer about introducing your puppy into its new animal family.
- Proper socialization of puppies during the critical socialization period (3-14 weeks of age) has a big impact on your dog's behavior for the rest of its life. See: [avma.org/socialization](http://avma.org/socialization)
- Consult with your veterinarian to determine how best to care for your dog including preventive health care, socialization and training.

For more information, visit:

[www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org)



[www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org) | 800.248.3862

# SELECTING A DOG

*Brought to you by your veterinarian  
and the American Veterinary Medical Association*



# PETS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART

of the American household. Your dog-owning experience will be most enjoyable if you carefully consider which pet best suits your family, home, and lifestyle. The primary reason dogs are given up to animal shelters is unfulfilled expectations, so make an informed decision. Take time, involve your family, and give careful consideration to the following questions:

## WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT DOGS?

The saying that “dogs are a man’s [or woman’s] best friend” has a lot of truth to it. Dogs have been faithful companions to humans for tens of thousands of years. They are friendly, affectionate, and entertaining. They are also capable of doing extraordinary jobs—and seem to enjoy doing them.

## WHAT CHOICES DO YOU HAVE?

Dogs have been selectively bred for generations to exhibit specific physical and behavioral traits. The amazing diversity of dogs includes varied sizes, hair coat lengths, colors, temperaments, and activity levels. A dog’s size may affect its lifespan; the lifespan of a large-breed dog tends to be shorter than that of a smaller dog.

## WHAT ARE THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF DOGS?

Some dogs may be at greater risk for certain medical conditions, while others may require more training, exercise and patience to help them to become good companions. Others will need special grooming to manage their coat. Ask your veterinarian about healthcare requirements and temperament that may be common in the breed or type you are considering.

## WHO WILL CARE FOR YOUR DOG?

As its owner, you will ultimately be responsible for your dog’s food, shelter, companionship, exercise, and physical and mental health for the rest of its life. While families should involve their children in caring for a pet, youngsters need the help of an adult who is willing, able, and available to supervise the daily care of a pet. You should arrange for people to care for your dog during planned or emergency absences.

## DOES A DOG FIT INTO YOUR LIFESTYLE?

Feeding, grooming, exercise, play and elimination are daily needs that must be considered in caring for a healthy, happy dog. Think about the following factors when deciding if you should get a dog and in determining what breed or type would be the most appropriate for you and your family:

- Do you have the time to provide the care and attention a dog needs?
- Do you live in the city, suburbs, or country?
- Do you rent or do you own your home?
- Are there any restrictions on number or types of pets where you live (building, town, or state ordinances)?
- Do you live in an apartment or single-family home? Do you have easy access to areas where a dog can exercise?
- How long is your work day? Do you frequently have obligations after work?
- Who will care for your dog(s) in your absence?
- Do you have other pets? Will your new dog get along with your existing pets?
- What future changes might occur in your living situation that would affect your ability to keep your dog in years to come?
- Are you prepared to meet the grooming needs of a dog — whether at home or at a professional grooming facility?
- Are you prepared to provide appropriate veterinary care throughout your dog’s life to help prevent and treat illness or injury?
- What are you looking for in a dog (e.g., jogging or hiking companion, cuddly lap dog, or high energy companion)?



## SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR A PUPPY OR AN ADULT DOG? WHAT SIZE OF DOG SHOULD YOU GET?

Puppies require additional time for housetraining, socialization, and obedience training, as well as more frequent feeding, exercise, and supervision. Consider the possibility of an adult dog; older pets are often already housetrained, know some basic commands, and usually adapt very well to their new home.

Some larger or high energy dogs require more space, and they may be harder to maintain in an apartment or condominium. Whatever the size of your dog, it must be provided with access to the outdoors multiple times a day for elimination and exercise.

## CAN YOU AFFORD A DOG?

The purchase price for a dog can vary tremendously by breed and source, and is only the initial expense for a dog. Dogs need quality food, proper housing, mental stimulation (e.g., toys, play time), and regular visits to a veterinarian for preventive care. Other costs may include emergency medical treatment, grooming, boarding, licensing, identification, sterilization (spaying or neutering), training, and accessories. Pet health insurance is available and can help defray unexpected expenses resulting from illness or injury.

## WHERE DO YOU FIND A DOG?

Purebred dogs can be obtained from reputable breeders. Both mixed-breed and purebred dogs can be obtained from animal shelters and rescue organizations. In many communities, there are rescue groups dedicated to finding good homes for specific dog breeds and their mixes.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR IN A HEALTHY DOG?

A healthy dog has clear, bright eyes; a clean, shiny hair coat; and does not appear thin, overly fat, or show signs of illness, such as nasal discharge or diarrhea.

When choosing a dog, pick one that is active, friendly, inquisitive, and not afraid of you. The dog should accept gentle handling and not exhibit signs of aggression. The temperament of a puppy’s parents may be an indication of its future behavior.

In case of any problems with your new dog you should be able to easily contact the provider of your dog, and they should provide you with up-to-date health records, a receipt, and acknowledge of their obligations under local Pet Purchase Protection Laws.

## WHAT MUST YOU DO TO PREPARE FOR YOUR DOG?

Before bringing your new dog home ensure all members of your family welcome this new addition. Prepare an appropriate place for it to eat and sleep and have ready the necessary accessories such as a collar and leash, ID tag, food, and water bowls. Be sure to pet-proof your home to prevent injury to your dog or damage to your possessions. For example, make sure that electrical wires and cords are out of the reach of curious mouths. Ask your veterinarian about other ways to make your home safe for your pet.