



The Are You Ready for a Dog Kit

by Claire Buchwald
Courtesy of The Gryphon Press
www.thegryphonpress.com



This kit is a companion to The Gryphon Press Book, *Are You Ready for Me?*

Use this kit as a guide to determine if you and your child are ready to adopt a dog as a family pet.

- Is your child begging for a dog?
- Are you considering a dog for a family pet?
- Will you be getting your first dog soon?
- Are you unsure about whether your family and a dog are right for each other?

If any of the above statements describes you, this comprehensive kit will give you just what you need. This kit will help you:

decide as a parent whether a dog is right for your family.

If you think that it might be, you can go further with the kit by:

- reading *Are You Ready for Me?* By Claire Buchwald, available at bookstores
- talking with your child about whether your child has enough desire and preparation to take care of a dog
- testing your knowledge and your child's about what dog ownership entails

If your family decides not to get a dog at this time, you will have made an informed decision together. You can end the begging without being the "bad guy" who just says no out of hand. You will find information about other options for your animal-loving family. You will also find a special reward certificate to honor your child for the maturity to decide not to own a dog at this point. The certificate lets you offer your child another gift – an easier pet, a nonliving thing, or an activity.

If, after working through the story and fun quizzes, it seems that a dog is the right choice for your family, you will find a gift certificate announcing to your child that your family will go

together to choose a dog. Imagine the excitement on your child's face and the satisfaction you will feel at being prepared and excited for your new family member! You and your child will fill out a contract to keep for yourselves and show to the shelter, rescue group, or breeder from whom you wish to adopt. The contract will show that your family is knowledgeable and committed; a dog you adopt will be in good hands. The kit also contains a list of items to purchase and prepare before choosing your dog, information about where to go to find a healthy dog, and questions to consider and a list to make in order to find the one who is right for you.

Contents

The *Are You a Dog Family?* Quick Sheet

Assessment: Are You and a Dog Right for Each Other?

The picture book, *Are You Ready for Me?*
The Readiness Quiz for Parents (with Answers)
The Readiness Quiz for Kids (with Answers)

Wise Decision: for Those Who Have Decided Not to Get a Dog at This Point

Reward Certificate for Responsible Decision-Making
Other Good Choices for Animal Lovers

Dog Time!

Gift Certificate for a Child Who is Ready for a Dog
We Are Ready to Have a Dog Contract
Finding the Right Dog for You
Our Dog Checklist
What We Will Need for Our Dog
Where to Get a Dog

Are You a Dog Family? Quick Sheet **A Down-and-Dirty First Check of Whether You Really Want a Dog**

On a DAILY basis, can you live with:

- drool
- dog kisses on the face and hands
- sniffing of your body and of other dogs
- fur on your clothing and furniture
- having to pick up poop every time your dog goes
- taking walks in all kinds of weather, even if you are sick or exhausted
- barking
- the possibility of having to clean up dog poop, pee, or vomit

Do you have:

- enough room for a dog
- a stable place to live (that allows pets)
- a safe nearby area to walk your dog
- time and patience to train a dog
- time to pet, feed, walk, play with, and praise your dog every day
- \$500 or more a year to spend on veterinary bills, food, and other necessities
- the ability to commit to care for a dog for its entire lifetime (even if it becomes sick, incontinent, injured, or slow)

Do you NOT have:

- people in your family who dislike dogs
- fear of dogs
- dog allergies
- a territorial cat or child

Advance to the assessment part of the kit only if you can check *all* the blanks above.

If you realize already that getting a dog is not the right decision for your family, advance to the “Wise Decision” part of the kit.

Assessment:

Are You and a Dog Right for Each Other?

Readiness Quiz for Parents

Is your family ready to get a dog? If you think so, you may want to take this quiz to test your family's preparedness. If you still think so, you are ready to bring your child into the picture through a three-step preparation process: read and discuss the book with you, take a quiz, give your child the gift certificate if you feel that s/he is ready, and fill out the contract as a family. Then, you can go adopt your new family member!

True or false (circle one correct answer):

- | | | |
|---|------|-------|
| 1. A dog only needs to be walked once a day. | True | False |
| 2. It is okay to leave a dog chained or crated for long periods of time. | True | False |
| 3. A dog needs me to pet and talk to him/her every day. | True | False |
| 4. Letting the dog out to run in the yard is as good as a walk. | True | False |
| 5. A dog needs to have fresh water at all times. | True | False |
| 6. If we get a dog, we are committing ourselves to it for life, except in a real unforeseen family emergency. | True | False |
| 7. It's okay to get a dog if some members of the family love dogs and others do not like them at all. | True | False |
| 8. Dogs need to go to the veterinarian every year. | True | False |
| 9. We can train our dog not to dog-things like sniffing the ground or other dogs, barking, and wanting attention. | True | False |
| 10. If we get a dog, we will have to pick up after it. | True | False |
| 11. It's okay to let a dog run free in the neighborhood, because it is a dog-friendly place. | True | False |
| 12. A dog costs several hundred dollars a year to keep. | True | False |
| 13. If some members of our family or caregivers have allergies, we can just keep the dog away from them. | True | False |
| 14. Spaying or neutering our pet is important. | True | False |
| 15. Even if a child says s/he will take care of a dog, the real responsibility is still ours. | True | False |
| 16. A dog can be a great friend and family member. | True | False |

Answers to the Readiness Quiz for Parents

1. False. A dog needs at least two walks a day, one in the morning and one in the evening. Walks should be at least 15-20 minutes long and should include time for going to the bathroom and for sniffing the ground.
2. False. A dog should not be chained, tied out, penned, or crated for more than an hour or two a day. If kept locked up in any of these ways, the dog should only be out in appropriate weather. The dog needs food and fresh water. The place needs to be safe from people or animals who would hurt or disturb your dog.
3. True. If you only want to be with a dog occasionally, that's okay, but in that case, give love to a friend's dog or volunteer your time at an animal shelter. Your own dog will need love and attention from *you*, the parents, every single day, several times a day.
4. False. Running in the yard, if the yard is fenced or if you are supervising, is good, but it cannot take the place of the exercise and exploration that a walk offers.
5. True. Their water and food dishes need to be cleaned every day too.
6. True. Your dog is a family member. Just as you would not give away a child, you should not buy a dog thinking that you can always get rid of it later. If you absolutely cannot keep your dog, you need to make sure it gets a good home.
7. False. Everyone does not have to be a dog enthusiast, but in order for the home to be good for the dog, everyone has to be able to be kind, patient, and at least somewhat loving to the dog. If your family cannot offer this, it is wrong to bring a dog into the home.
8. False. A dog is a dog. He cannot help doing dog things, such as barking, sniffing the ground, and sniffing other dogs. It is cruel and unfair to expect a dog to be other than it is. Depending what kind of dog you get and what its past experiences have been, it may also shed fur, whine, pee or poop in the house on occasion, chew things, or eat food it is not supposed to eat. Just as you would never beat or get rid of your child for being a kid or making mistakes, only people who will love their dog despite mess and inconvenience should get a dog.
9. True. Dog owners are required by law to pick up their dog's poop and throw it away. If you get a dog, you will get used to having bags with you to use for scooping your dog's poop.
10. True. Dogs need regular check-ups, tests, preventive medicine, and shots. You will have to show proof of rabies vaccination in order for your dog to get a new license each time.
11. False. Dogs must never run free because of cars, other dogs, abusive people, dog thieves, and trouble dogs can get into (like digging up a neighbor's flowers or getting into someone's trash). It is against the law in most suburbs and cities for dogs to be out of their yard without a leash and owner. Dogs found running unleashed will mean fines for you and sometimes impoundment for the dog.
12. True. Each year, a dog needs veterinary appointments, preventive medicine (such as heartworm pills), tests (for heartworm), and shots (such as rabies). These will probably cost \$200-\$400. Of course, if your dog gets sick or injured, veterinary cost can reach into the

thousands. Good dog food costs money (another \$200-300) a year. Obedience training will cost some money, as will the dogs initial set-up: food and water dishes, a leash, collar, tag, and

brush. You will have to pay a groomer to clip your dog's nails if you cannot do it. Depending on the laws in your neighborhood, your dog will need a new license every 1-2 years; there is usually a fee of around \$30-50. Every time you leave town without your dog, you will need to get a dog-sitter or kennel your dog. In short, a dog costs at least \$500-700 a year to care for properly.

13. False. If a family member or others who must be in your home for more than an hour or two at a time, they will be effected by the dog's presence. Pet dander moves through the ventilation system in a home. Having a dog in a home with someone who is allergic (unless that person takes allergy medicine) will be stressful and unfair to the dog and the person.
14. True. Unless you are a qualified, careful breeder of purebred dogs, it is important that you spay or neuter your dog. There are hundreds of thousands of unwanted dogs in this country; thousands die every day for lack of homes. Even if you placed the puppies in good homes (the best thing you can do in the case of accidental pregnancy), they would be taking spaces from other animals needing homes. If your religious beliefs prevent you from neutering or spaying a pet, it is best to adopt an already-neutered pet who needs a home.
15. True. Children are children: they are not capable of assuming adult responsibilities. Sometimes, they will be sick or over at a friend's house. The final responsibility for seeing the pet well-cared for will therefore be yours. Children also get busy with school, extracurricular activities, and social activities. You are the real constant in a dog's life. When most children leave home, they move to apartments, few of which accept pets, or college dormitories, none of which do. The dog will stay with you. You will be the one to walk it, feed it, take it to the veterinarian, and eventually make health and life-and-death decisions for the dog. For these reasons, no matter how much your child wants a dog, if you don't want the responsibility for one, you need to make the adult decision to say no.
16. True. Dogs are known to be good for people's health and emotions. Dogs are perhaps the most loyal, loving creatures ever to live. If your family gets a dog, they will benefit in countless ways.

Readiness Quiz for Kids

Are you ready to get a dog? Once you have read the book, Are You Ready for Me? you may take this quiz and have your parents go over the answers with you. See if you are ready for a dog of your own.

True or false (circle one correct answer):

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. A dog only needs to be walked once a day. | True | False |
| 2. It is okay to leave a dog chained or crated for a whole day. | True | False |
| 3. A dog needs me to pet and talk to him/her to every day. | True | False |
| 4. Letting the dog out to run in the yard is as good as a walk. | True | False |
| 5. My dog needs to have fresh water to drink any time he or she wants. | True | False |
| 6. If I adopt or buy a dog, I am committing myself to love it forever and to keep and care for it always, unless there is an emergency situation I cannot control. | True | False |
| 7. It's okay if I and one of my parents love dogs but the other parent does not like dogs. | True | False |
| 8. Dogs need to go to the veterinarian every year. | True | False |
| 9. I can train my dog not to do things like sniffing the ground or sniffing other dogs, barking, and wanting attention. | True | False |
| 10. If I get a dog, I will have to reach down and pick up its poop, even if it poops in the bushes in the park. | True | False |
| 11. It's okay to let my dog run free in the neighborhood, because people around here like dogs. | True | False |
| 12. A dog can be a great friend and family member. | True | False |

Answers to the Readiness Quiz for Kids

1. False. A dog needs at least two walks a day, one in the morning and one in the evening. Walks should be at least 15-20 minutes long and should include time for going to the bathroom and for sniffing the ground.
2. False. A dog should not be chained, tied out, penned, or crated for more than an hour or two a day. If kept locked up in any of these ways, the dog should only be out in appropriate weather. The dog needs food and fresh water. The place needs to be safe from people or animals who would hurt or disturb your dog.
3. True. If you only want to be with a dog occasionally, that's okay, but in that case, give love to a friend's dog or volunteer your time at an animal shelter. Your own dog will need love and attention from you every single day, several times a day.
4. False. Running in the yard, if the yard is fenced or if you are supervising, is good, but it cannot take the place of the exercise and exploration that a walk offers.
5. True. Their water and food dishes need to be cleaned every day too.
6. True. Your dog is a family member. Just as you would not give away a brother or sister, you should not buy a dog thinking that you can always get rid of it later. You are adopting that family member. If you absolutely cannot keep your dog, you need to make sure it gets a good home or at least goes to a no-kill animal shelter that will help it find a home.
7. False. Everyone does not have to love dogs *as much as you do*, but in order for the home to be good for the dog, everyone has to be able to be kind, patient, and at least somewhat loving to the dog. If your family cannot offer this, you should wait until you are an adult to have a dog in your home.
8. False. A dog is a dog. He cannot help doing dog things, such as barking, sniffing the ground, and sniffing other dogs. It is cruel and unfair to expect a dog to be other than it is. Depending what kind of dog you get and what its past experiences have been, it may shed fur, whine, pee or poop in the house on occasion, chew things, or eat food it is not supposed to eat. Just as you would never beat or get rid of your child for being a kid or making mistakes, only people who will love their dog despite mess and inconvenience should get a dog.
9. True. Dog owners are required by law to pick up their dog's poop and throw it away. If you get a dog, you will get used to having bags with you to use for scooping your dog's poop.
10. True. Dogs need regular check-ups, tests, preventive medicine, and shots. You will have to show proof of rabies vaccination in order for your dog to get a new license each time.
11. False. Dogs must never run free because of cars, other dogs, people who are mean or would steal a dog, and trouble dogs can get into (like digging up a neighbor's flowers or getting into someone's trash). It is against the law in most suburbs and cities for dogs to be out of their yard without a leash and owner.

12. True. Dogs are known to be good for people's health and emotions. Dogs are perhaps the most loyal, loving creatures ever. If you get a dog, you will be very lucky.

Wise Decision

**For those who have decided not
to get a dog at this point**

Responsible Decision-Making Reward

We hereby proclaim proudly that

has made a wise, responsible decision

to wait to get a dog.

**This shows that you really care about dogs
and about doing what is right for others and for yourself.**

In honor of this maturity and goodness,

we will present you with

CONGRATULATIONS!

Other Good Choices for Animal Lovers

- Be a part of dogs' lives by going as a family with an adult to help at a local animal shelter. The dogs there need walking, petting, and attention. You can do a good deed, learn about dogs, and have fun being with them, even if you cannot own a dog yourself.

You can find local shelters and dog rescue groups in your area by looking online (try www.petfinder.org and then look for listings of shelter by zip code or city) or in the phone book.

- Offer to help an elderly or busy neighbor care for his or her pet. You can walk the neighbor's dog, play with it, and pet it. Dogs need a lot of attention and will be thrilled for yours. You will be important in the dog's life. (Please note: your parents and you should meet the dog and owner and spend time with them before you have any direct responsibility for the dog or are alone with the owner. You need to stay safe.)
- Help animals in other ways than through direct contact: you can have a birthday party and ask that people bring donations for a local shelter or rescue group (be sure to ask the rescue group or shelter first, so you know what people should bring) instead of presents. Find other ways to help raise money for a local shelter or volunteer at fund-raising events, such as animal walks.
- Keep learning and thinking about dogs. You can get dog books from the library that will teach you about different types of dog. You can also find wonderful fiction (made-up stories) about dogs. You can write dog stories yourself, decorate your rooms in dog prints, check out dogs online, or draw dogs.
- Find a pet besides a dog:
 - ❖ Cats do not need to be walked. They can live in smaller homes than dogs and they do not need as much attention. Owning a cat is still a big responsibility. It still costs money to care for food, cat litter, and veterinary attention. Also, a cat's litter box (where the cat goes to the bathroom) has to be cleaned at least once a day. Since many people have allergies to cats, you need to be sure that no one in your family is allergic. There will be some friends who, because of their allergies, may not be able to visit you if you have a cat.
 - ❖ Easier pets include rodents (like gerbils and hamsters), reptiles (such as lizards), hermit crabs and fish. Even these pets will require daily care, so, while easier to own than dogs, you still have to make a serious decision about whether your family can care for one.
- Visit and learn about animals at the zoo. Zoos often offer free days and family memberships.
- Set up bird feeders in your yard. You can learn about different types of birds from books or online.

Dog Time!

Gift Certificate

**Due to your preparation and readiness,
we proclaim that**

will be taken to choose a dog!

CONGRATULATIONS!

We Are Ready to Have a Dog CONTRACT

We, the _____ family, do solemnly promise that:

WE KNOW—

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> we have the space for the dog | <input type="checkbox"/> we can stay in a place where dogs are allowed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> we have the time for a dog | <input type="checkbox"/> we can love a dog and be good pet-owners |
| <input type="checkbox"/> we have the patience for a dog | <input type="checkbox"/> we will not get tired of a dog |
| <input type="checkbox"/> we have the money to feed and care for dog | <input type="checkbox"/> a dog is not a thing—it is a living part of our family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> we are not allergic to dogs | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> we are allowed to have dogs where we live | |

WE WILL—

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> give our dog regular medical attention from a veterinarian | <input type="checkbox"/> give our dog high-quality food and clean his/her dish regularly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> make sure that our dog gets his/her shots | <input type="checkbox"/> make sure our dog has access to fresh water all the time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> keep our dog safe—off the street and away from people or animals who would harm him/her | <input type="checkbox"/> play with our dog daily |
| <input type="checkbox"/> license our dog | <input type="checkbox"/> pet our dog every day |
| <input type="checkbox"/> spay or neuter our dog unless we are knowledgeable, licensed breeders | <input type="checkbox"/> talk to our dog every day |
| <input type="checkbox"/> walk our dog at least twice a day | <input type="checkbox"/> groom our dog and clip our dog's nails (either ourselves or with a groomer) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> train our dog to be around people and other dogs | <input type="checkbox"/> spend at least some time home with our dog every day (or have somebody be there) |

WE WILL NEVER—

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> abandon our dog | <input type="checkbox"/> punish our dog for something s/he cannot help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hurt our dog | <input type="checkbox"/> ignore our dog |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sell or give our dog to someone who would hurt him/her | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> let our dog run free in the neighborhood or by streets | |

We make all these promises.

We promise to love our dog and care for it like a member of our family.

Signed,
(Please sign and date.)

Finding the Right Dog for You

Now that your family has decided to get a dog, how do you know what kind of dog is right for you?

Ultimately, the right dog will be one you feel a connection to when you meet it.

Before you get to that point, though, it is important to decide where to get a dog and what kind(s) of dog would be a good fit with your family. The informational sheet *Where to Get a Dog* will help you answer that question. First, you will want to determine what kind of dog is right for your family. Here are some questions to discuss as a family:

SIZE

- How big is your home? What size dog would be comfortable in it?
- How big is your yard? Is it fenced? What size of dog would enjoy your yard?
- Who will walk the dog? Is that person big and strong enough to walk a big dog?
- How long a walk will your dog be able to get?
- (A big dog will need a longer walk than a little one.)
- What size dog is each of you most comfortable with?
- Will close relatives and friends or others who come to the home often be uncomfortable with a really little or big dog?

COAT

- How often will you brush a dog?
(Dogs with longer coats need more frequent brushing.)
- Will your parents mind shedding? (Dogs with fuller coats need more brushing.)
- Do you want to play with your dog outside in cold weather?
(Thicker-coated dogs can stay in the cold longer.)
- What kind of coat do you like the look of? – close and glossy, medium, or long and thick or silky?
- What kind of coat do you like the feel of close and glossy, medium, or long and thick or silky?

BARKING

- All dogs except for Basenjis bark. Bigger dogs have loud, booming barks. Small dogs have higher-pitched barks. Which one do you like most (or mind least)?
- Some breeds of dog tend to bark more than others. Would that be a problem in your home?

EXERCISE

- How much exercise will you want to do with your dog?
Some dogs need more exercise than others, depending on the breed (some types of dog tend to be more active than others), the individual personality of the dog, and, to a degree, the size.
- Will someone take the dog along when jogging, cross-country skiing, hiking, or biking?
(Some dogs are better suited for running or for walking long distances.)
- Is there a dog park near your home where the dog can run regularly?
(A toy dog may not need a walk at all, just a romp in the yard, but every other size of dog will need to walk and run beyond a yard. Generally, bigger dogs need more space to stretch their legs.)

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

- Will you want your dog to participate in dog training competitions, flyball, or agility?
- Do you want a jogging or biking partner?
- Do you want a sled dog?
- Do you want a hunting dog?
- Do you want a companion dog who will follow you from room to room?
Some dogs are better suited to each of these types of activity than others.

PROTECTION/AGGRESSION

- Do you want a quiet dog who will just wag her tail at people who come to your house?
- Do you want a dog who will give you a warning bark when someone arrives?
- Do you want a watchdog who will actively protect your home and family?
(The downside of having a dog who is protective is that the dog might scare, growl at, or even bite someone. The more aggressive a dog tends to be, the better it might defend your home-but at some risk to others. It is especially important to train a more aggressive dog very well.)

COMPATIBILITY

- Do you have a cat or are you getting one? Do you need a dog who can get along well with cats?
- How old is the youngest child in your family? Do you need a dog who is comfortable and safe with young children or babies?
- Will this dog live with other dogs? Do you need a dog who likes the company of other dogs?

Once you have thought through these different qualities as a family, you can make your family's checklist of most desired qualities in a dog.

Use your checklist as a guide when researching types of dog online (you can look at www.akc.com for information in breeds), in a dog book, or at an animal adoption or shelter.

Bring your list with you when you go to look at dogs, so you are not just swayed by an adorable face but remember what kind of dog makes the best match for your family.

Ask the caregivers of the dogs – the breeders or foster parents – about whether a dog you are interested in fits your criteria. Find out everything else the caregivers can tell you about a particular dog that interests you (or, if it is a puppy, about the dog's parents). Good luck in the fun treasure hunt of finding a family dog!

Our Dog Checklist

SIZE
COAT
BARKING
EXERCISE
SPECIAL ACTIVITIES
PROTECTION / AGGRESSION
COMPATIBILITY

Use this checklist as a guide when researching types of dog online (you can look at www.akc.com for information in breeds), in a dog book, or at an animal adoption or shelter.

Bring this list with you when you go to look at dogs, so you are not just swayed by an adorable face but remember what kind of dog makes the best match for your family.

Ask the caregivers of the dogs – the breeders or foster parents – about whether a dog you are interested in fits your criteria. Find out everything else the caregivers can tell you about a particular dog that interests you (or, if it is a puppy, about the dog's parents). Good luck in the fun treasure hunt of finding a family dog!

Where to Get a Dog

Note: Where Not to Get a Dog: a pet store, or from an ad in the paper. Pet stores often buy their animals from puppy mills. Puppy mill owners often advertise falsely online or in the newspaper, as if they were reputable breeders. It is important that you visit the breeder to see your puppy's home environment.

The best places to get a dog are through a reputable breeder (if you definitely want a purebred), through an Animal Human Society or local shelter, or from a local rescue group. Here is information about each option:

Buying a Dog from a Breeder

Dog breeders are specially licensed, experienced people who breed dogs for temperament, looks, and other qualities. A reputable breeder will help you decide if one of its dogs is right for you, tell you when they are expecting a new litter of puppies, help you choose from among the pups based on temperament for your family, give you information on how to care for that breed of dog, and, if there is a problem with your new pet, take it back to find a new home for it. Buying a purebred dog from a reputable breeder allows you to have a fairly exact idea of how your puppy will turn out (its size, coat, temperament, needs, and inclinations), because you can usually see at least one of your puppy's parents and talk to the breeder about his/her particular dogs. Buying a dog from a breeder is, however, significantly more expensive than buying a dog from a shelter or rescue group. If you are not determined to get a specific breed of dog, if you are not planning to show your dog, if you want to take a dog that needs a home, or if you don't want to start with a puppy, it may be better to get a pet from a shelter or rescue group.

In order to find a reputable breeder, search the internet (at home or a library) for:

The American Kennel Club: www.akc.org

The website has information about the different breeds (click on breeds), on things to consider when choosing a dog (click on future dog owners), and on dog care (click on future dog owners). If you think you have found the right breed for you, you can find a list of breeders and purebred organizations. Go to the site listed and click on "breeders," "breed stewards," or "finding a dog" to find a list of breeders by state. You may also be able to find information on rescue groups who have adult purebred dogs who need a home.

You can also find information at your local library, pet store, or book store. Dog-training clubs in your area would have information about reputable breeders and about the qualities of different types of dog. You can check the American Kennel Club website (www.aks.org) to find out when the next dog show will be. An AKC dog show allows you to see the many different kinds of dogs available and also to meet local owners and breeders of the kinds of dog that interest you. For a rescue dog (usually an adult) of a specific breed, check www.petfinder.org or go to www.akc.org/breeds/rescue.cfm and search by breed name.

Buying a Dog from a Shelter

Dog rescue groups are excellent places from which to buy a dog. Rescue groups usually foster the dogs with families, so they can give you in-depth descriptions of how a dog is with children, with cats, with adults of both genders, and in general; what the dog likes to do; if it is mellow or active; etc.

Dog rescue groups often have their own websites with pictures and descriptions of available dogs and information about the next animal adoption day. Sometimes, rescue groups will have puppies, though they more often have adult dogs. The advantage of getting an adult dog is that you know just what it will like and how big it will be. Rescue organizations will have some purebred dogs available as well as many mixed breeds. Buying from a rescue group is more affordable than buying from a breeder. You will also have the satisfaction of knowing that the dog you buy really needs a home; you are doing a good deed by rescuing it. Rescued dogs are often especially loving and happy to leave the shelter and have a real home.

In order to find a shelter in your area, you can:

Use the phone book or go to one of these websites:

www.Pet911.com

www.petfinder.org

or www.petsmart.com or www.petco.org (two major pet stores that host adoption days from rescue groups – you are not buying a dog from the pet store but adopting it from the rescue organization – and often post schedules on local stores' websites of adoption events).

Rescue groups for specific breeds of dog can be found at www.akc.org/breeds/rescue.cfm ,

What We Will Need for Our Dog

Most of what you will need for your dog should be bought when you choose that dog. At that point, you can ask the shelter, rescue group, or breeder what food and other things they recommend. You will also know the age and size of your dog, which are important when selecting a collar and food.

- Food
- Dishes for food and water (at least one set – possibly one for the kitchen and another for out in the yard and/or in a bathroom, bedroom, or downstairs family room)
- Collar
- Leash
- Brush and comb
- Dog nail clippers
- Possibly a lint brush for people’s clothes and furniture
- A crate or dog seatbelt for transporting the dog safely
- Cleaning products in case your dog is sick or has an accident in the house
- Possibly a dog bed or dog mat
- Toys (appropriate for the size and age of the dog)
- Treats and safe things to chew on
- Old or inexpensive towels for cleaning muddy paws, mud on floors, and other messes

Some things to do the first week you have your dog:

- Spend as much time with the dog as possible.
- Make the dog feel comfortable in its new home.
- Establish some routines with the dog. Let the dog know what you want from it, where it is okay for the dog to be, and what it is okay for the dog to do.
- Determine what kind of training is best for your dog and sign up for it.
- Determine if your dog needs a special collar or harness (such as a “Gentle Leader”) to help it learn to walk well on a leash.
- Take your dog to a veterinarian and establish patient records for it.
- Let the vet determine if your dog needs any vaccinations or medications (unless these were done already by the rescue group, shelter, or breeder). Save your dog’s medical records somewhere where you can find them when you need them.
- Apply for a pet license in your city. (You will need proof of rabies vaccination.)
- Be patient and loving to your dog as she adjusts to her new home with you.
- Celebrate the beginning of a fabulous new friendship.