

Choosing between a puppy and an adult

It's hard to resist a puppy's cute baby face and wiggling body, but will a puppy best meet your expectations for pet parenthood? Before you get your heart set on that pup, consider these facts about puppies and adult dogs:



Puppies

Puppies are impish and adorable, and most people melt with one glance from their soulful eyes. But before you go looking, consider the long-term commitment.

- > Puppies need almost as much attention as human babies. They require weeks or even months of rigorous training and nurturing to grow into well-behaved adults. You'll spend your free time housebreaking, exercising, and training your puppy—and finding new places to hide your chewed-on shoes.
- > The first year of your puppy's life can be expensive, too, when you consider those important and frequent trips to the veterinarian. And don't forget obedience classes!
- > Although they require extra effort, many people prefer puppies. Puppies are born with distinct temperamental tendencies, but you can help forge their personalities through attentive, affectionate care. Best of all, you can prevent most behavior problems with early socialization and training.



Adults

People with busy schedules often find adult dogs better suit their lifestyles. Adult dogs require less time and training, and they adapt better to being alone when you're away. A word of caution, though: All dogs require your attention and love. If you're not sure you can give a dog enough time, consider a lower-maintenance pet like a bird or fish.

- > Although most adult dogs are well-behaved, you might not escape the training game completely. Some dogs may display bad habits that previous owners never corrected. Some misguided owners may have even encouraged unsocial behavior. But with a little work and a lot of patience, you can help correct your pet's bad habits.
- > At your local humane shelter, you'll find plenty of friendly adult dogs who need good homes—especially given that puppies tend to get snatched up more quickly. Before you adopt, however, learn as much about the dog as you can. Ask about his health; whether or not he is housebroken; and about his behavior around children, other animals, and adults. Most important, ask why his family gave him up.
- > Keep in mind that shelters only offer adoptable dogs. Although some may have mild behavior problems ranging from fear of noises to excessive barking, dogs who are known to be violent are euthanized.