

FACT SHEET

Choosing the right type of dog for you

Before rushing into buying yourself a dog, you need to think long and hard about the consequences. Owning a dog requires a certain amount of work and a lot of commitment.

There are a number of questions which prospective owners should ask before an impulsive decision is made, which you may later regret.

Is somebody at home most of the day?

A dog should never be left for more than a few hours at any one time. It should certainly not be left all day while you go out to work.

Is somebody prepared and responsible enough to exercise the dog everyday?

It is no good deciding it is too cold or wet one day. The dog will still need exercising!

Are you prepared for the cost of keeping a dog?

This includes not only the price of food and routine worming and vaccinations but also unexpected vet bills and kennel fees when on holiday.

Have you got enough leisure time to spend with your dog?

All dogs need a lot of care and attention, regular grooming and basic training.

Have you got the space to keep a dog?

You may not realise it but dogs can take up a lot of space. If you only have a very small house or a flat you need to think carefully on the sort of dog you actually have room for.

Why do you want a dog?

This question needs careful consideration, if you are active and want to get involved with training and agility or perhaps showing then you might choose a totally different breed of dog than you would if you were less active and want a companion.

Pure breed or crossbreed?

It is always advisable when committing yourself to any type of dog to try and find out as much as you can with regard to the parentage this is usually easier when obtaining a pure bred dog. With a pure bred dog you know for certain what size the puppy will be when adult. If you obtain a crossbreed it may be more difficult to ascertain this.

If you want to show your dog it is advisable to get a pedigree dog, as crossbreeds are only able to be shown at exemption shows.

Long or short haired?

This really depends on the amount of available spare time you have to look after your pet and whether you are prepared to put in all the hard work that it takes to look after a longhaired dog. Dog hair tangles and mats more readily than human hair and though smooth coated dogs require only minimal grooming, breeds such as Afghans and Old English Sheepdogs need grooming daily in order to keep the coat healthy. If you take on such a breed, be prepared for some back breaking grooming sessions; a bench of suitable height will make things much easier.

Dog or bitch?

A lot of people will say that a dog is less trouble than a bitch though this is not necessarily so. A dog is far more likely to have a dominant personality than a bitch, which can cause problems, particularly to new owners who are not necessarily used to handling dogs. A bitch is generally more biddable, however she will come into season two or three times a year, (depending on size) for approximately 21 days, during which time she needs to be kept under close supervision. This can cause problems with some bitches wanting to escape and dogs being attracted to the house. Bitches can be spayed, if you do not wish to breed from them, likewise male dogs can be castrated.

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Puppy or adult?

If you are getting an adult dog it may be that you are rescuing a dog that would otherwise be destroyed. This is great but it is worthwhile finding out as much as you can about that dog's history to know what has happened to it in the past. You may discover that the dog has bitten or that he has a fear of something, which can take time to establish and work through.

Buying a puppy however lessens the chance of getting a dog with problems but remember they also need a lot of attention. They are by no means just a bundle of fur. They leave puddles on the floor and can chew practically everything in sight until a lot of hard work and training teaches them right from wrong.

Temperament

This is one of the most important factors to bear in mind. You need to find a dog that has a temperament suited to your personality. A dominant dog will need a dominant owner or the mismatch of personalities can cause disasters.

Owning a dog can be a very rewarding experience. In addition to their value as a companion and family member, dogs can be trained in rescue work, to help with disabled people as well as working daily to aid the police force, shepherd and farmer.

Once you have considered all these questions you may have decided whether you want an adult or a puppy and what breed you are looking for. It is worth noting that there are over 200 breeds to choose from within the UK and if you are in any doubt ask for advice from people who know the dogs such as breeders or the kennel club.

Speak to as many people as possible to find out as much as you can about different breeds.

In the case of a rescue dog this may be more difficult; however it is worth finding out as much about their background as possible so that you will have some idea of what you are taking on.

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