

Good (and Bad) Reasons to Get a Dog

Is a dog a good choice for your family?

Here are some good and bad reasons for choosing a dog as a pet for you and your family:

“Good” Reasons	“Bad” Reasons
<p>Companionship - Dogs are social animals that thrive on companionship with their family. If you have the time to invest in a dog, the rewards are enormous. On the other hand, if your lifestyle means that most days your dog will be left alone for long periods of time, a dog may not be the best pet choice.</p>	<p>Impulse - Avoid the “doggie in the window” syndrome. Set yourself up for success by careful planning. Getting a dog is a life-changing decision which shouldn’t be taken lightly.</p>
<p>Socialization - Dogs can be a bridge to contact with other people. Dogs require exercise and walking, and the required activity gets people out and about. For people living alone, a dog can increase the contact with the outside world while providing meaning and structure to one’s life.</p>	<p>Intimidation of Neighbors or Strangers - Dogs should never be used to intimidate those around someone. Backyard dogs or chained dogs are not really family pets. A whole range of behavioral issues can arise including territorial aggression, fears, other forms of aggression, and destructiveness to name just a few.</p>
<p>Regular Exercise - Walking, running, and bicycling are more fun with a buddy. A dog needs daily exercise. Along the way you can both stay fit!</p>	<p>A Fashion Statement - Selecting a dog for personal reasons such as being able to dress it up, carry it around like a toy, and treating it like an accessory are not good reasons to get a dog. Toy, miniature and teacup breeds are dogs, not accessories. Likewise, large and impressive breeds of dogs should not be acquired for macho statements either.</p>
<p>Children - Children can learn great life skills such as compassion, responsibility, negotiation and patience by helping to care for a pet. Realistic expectations will require parents to supervise the interactions of a dog and their children, but parents can set an example for their children. It is important to remember that parents are ultimately responsible for the care of the dog, but age appropriate tasks can be assigned.</p>	<p>Marital or Family Difficulties - A dog will not solve interpersonal problems among family members. The dog is more likely to become an element of stress in such a household.</p>
<p>Companion for Your Existing Dog - Dogs are social creatures, and many dogs appreciate the presence of a companion dog. Sometimes two dogs can be easier and more fun than one. But, each dog is an individual, and if you are not sure your dog would like another canine, consult a professional for advice.</p>	<p>Nagging Children - Adding a dog to the family is a major commitment of time and resources. Giving in to your children against your better judgment will be a mistake. Try getting your children involved in animal-themed activities instead, such as volunteering at a local shelter, so they can learn about the responsibilities of owning a dog.</p>
<p>Empty Home/Empty Heart - Your last dog has passed away. Without a canine companion, your house doesn’t feel like a <i>home</i>.</p>	<p>A Surprise Gift - The commitment to care for a dog should never be made for someone else. No matter how kind your intentions, give someone a dog only after frank and thorough discussion with the proposed recipient to be sure that the gift will be welcome and that they are involved in the selection process 100%.</p>