



Are You Ready for Parenthood?

When you acquire your very own dog or puppy, it is like having a baby in the house. Only *you* are now the parent! The family dog may have been your sibling, but with your own dog, you are now the person of authority and the person responsible for someone else. Pet ownership means that you may sometimes have to give up your own fun activities in order to care for your dog properly—just like your parents need to sacrifice for you sometimes. Still, having a dog has so many rewards of its own that you will probably not even notice.

Why Dogs Are Good for Kids

Dogs are good for you for many reasons. A dog is a friend who will always be there for you, 24/7. Your dog is never too busy to hang out with you and is always willing to try anything you want—be it a midnight snack or an early morning jog in the park. A dog will sleep in with you or get up early with no complaints.

A dog provides unconditional love, even when you are having a bad day or are in a bad mood. A dog won't care if your hair is a mess, you flunked your math test, or you were dead last in the cross-country meet. Your dog won't even care if you snore at night; he probably snores too!



Kids and dogs keep each other in great shape.

For those who are competitive, your dog is a dear partner, not a rival. Together, you may be a competitive team, but you never compete against each other. Your dog will try to cover for you—even take the blame for missing homework. As seen in the photo, dogs help you to get exercise while they are exercising, too.

Your dog is a great sounding board. You can practice your public speaking without fear of hysterical laughter or cruel criticism. You can tell your dog all your secrets with no fear of discovery. He will support you when you complain about your unjust parents and rejoice with you when you ace your science project. He may even help out with your science fair project by being a willing subject for checking heart rates or learning operant conditioning with a clicker, just like Pavlov's dogs drooling for dinner when they heard the dinner bell.

Your dog will also be your guardian angel. He will alert you to any dangers and drive off intruders with a bark or a growl. He will accompany you when you jog and discourage any unwanted attention. Your dog doesn't need power like a security system does; he is always working for you, and the price is right!

A dog of your very own will teach you about responsibility, compassion, empathy, sorrow, and happiness, and enjoying every minute of every day and every bit of mud.



Baloo can handle anything—even posing as a surfer dude!

Why Kids Are Good for Dogs

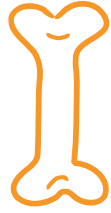
Kids are some of the best puppy and dog socializers in the world. Kids naturally assume that a dog will handle almost anything, and their confidence gives the dog confidence. A dog who grows up with kids is exposed to all kinds of things, from loud toys and interesting music to crazy outfits. Check out our surfer Aussie in the photo. Kids give a dog a chance to learn that people who move quickly or erratically or who scream and make crazy noises are just versions of a normal human. A dog with kid experience learns that people come in all sizes, shapes, and volume levels.

Dogs and kids both benefit from their relationship in terms of exercise. Your dog will need daily exercise and walks, which means you get daily exercise and walks, too. Kids tend to be more active than many adults, so they will be happy to take the dog for long walks, throw the ball for an hour, or play tug-of-war. Dogs are often seen at kid sports events—either as loyal fans or devoted mascots. Running laps with the soccer team is good exercise for your dog.

A dog who has grown up with kids will have learned all about silly games. He will know about being a good bed buddy and not hogging the covers. He will tolerate wearing T-shirts or funky hats and may even have learned to rush to the chairs while playing musical chairs. He will know not to bite the kids on the sleds as they fly down the hill or to tear at clothing on bike riders.

A dog should be allowed to sleep on the bed only if he respects the person in the bed—not growling if you roll over, always getting off when told to, and never threatening your authority. A well-behaved dog can keep you nice and warm on a cold night.

Kids often have more free time than most adults and willingly spend plenty of it with the dog. They can play with the dog right after school before settling down to do homework. On weekends, they are often free to exercise and train the dog. The extra attention is great for the dog, and as noted, is good for the kid, too.



Responsible Dog Ownership

Adding a dog to your family means added responsibilities to your community as well. You want your dog to be a welcome addition to the neighborhood, not a source of irritation. There are many ways to accomplish this.

A leash with a responsible person on the other end is one of the most important items in your dog's life. While on leash and with you, your dog can't chase the neighbor's cat, dig up a prized flowerbed, or chase a car and be injured or cause an accident. Whenever your dog leaves your property, he should be on a leash.

It is *extremely* important that all families clean up after their dogs. Leaving dog waste around for people to step in, causing bad odors or even leading to health problems, is not being responsible. Get a pooper scooper for your walks or carry poop bags. Along with cleaning up poop, don't let your dog urinate on people's flowers, trash cans, or cars.

Picking up poop sounds awful, but it is a skill you can quickly acquire. Some people prefer a scoop to snag their dog's poop and then carry it home or to a lined trash can. The most common method, however, is to use a baggie. You can practice at home picking up a dog biscuit. Put a biscuit on the floor. Then slip a baggie over your hand. Carefully reach down and pick up the biscuit. Then turn the bag inside out over the biscuit. Voilà! A twist tie helps to keep the odor down until you reach a trash can.

Picking up your dog's poop and keeping him on leash are very important steps in being a good dog neighbor. It is also important to keep your dog from barking—especially late at night or early in the morning. Most dogs bark from loneliness and boredom, so keep your dog inside or with you.

There are laws regarding dogs in many communities. Rabies vaccinations are required in the United States for public health reasons. Most communities require a license for dogs, and many have leash laws that limit when and where a dog may run while off leash. Respecting these laws is an important part of responsible dog ownership.

It is also important to make sure that your dog does not get involved in producing unplanned puppies. Spaying and neutering help control pet

overpopulation and also keep the number of dogs euthanized for lack of good homes down. A spayed or neutered dog also has no chance of testicular or uterine cancer and reduced chances of mammary and breast cancers. Many behavior problems can be reduced or even eliminated with spaying and neutering.

A well-behaved dog is a ticket to opportunities in your community—doing therapy dog visits to nursing homes, working with children in schools, or being allowed to attend sports functions. Make sure *your* dog is a great canine ambassador.

The Right Dog for You

Not every dog is right for every person. You need to do your homework so that you end up with just the right companion for you.

One of the first major decisions to make is whether you want a puppy or an adult dog. A puppy will require a much bigger time commitment initially. Puppies need frequent bathroom breaks, extra meals, lots of naps, and lots of patience. A puppy is more likely than a dog to chew your dearest possessions or dig a large hole in your mother's flower garden. A puppy is, of course, very cute and will grow up with you. Remember that puppies do grow; this pair of Belgian Tervurens shows the difference in size in a puppy and adult of that breed. Your puppy's personality will be partly shaped by your efforts and training. Drawbacks include the fact that you can't be sure of your puppy's adult temperament or his physical soundness. With a mixed breed puppy, you may just have to guess at his adult size and type of coat.



Puppy or dog? The choice can be a difficult one.



An adult dog won't be quite as cute as a puppy, but with any luck, the adult dog you choose will be housetrained, will be past the worst of the chewing stage, and might even have some basic training. You will know his size, type of coat, and basic temperament. An adult dog can bond just as strongly to you as a puppy, and many adult dogs who have had rough lives seem grateful to have a loving human of their very own. Your adult dog may come

with some baggage from previous homes, such as bad habits that you will need to retrain.

You need to consider many factors when you think of your ideal companion. (Your parents may want to offer some input here, too.) You should check out some good books about dog breeds and look at the behavior of groups of dogs as well as what they look like. Scenthounds and sighthounds vary greatly in the way they look at life, for example. Attending a dog show and checking out the various breeds, as well as talking to competitors, may help you decide which dog is best for you.

Financial considerations can be important, too—basically, who is paying for the dog and his expenses? Some dogs require professional grooming, which is an additional expense, but others require minimal efforts to stay clean. Grooming is expensive; who is paying, you or your parents? A large dog will need more dog food and bigger, more expensive beds and toys.

An active dog needs a definite commitment for daily exercise—even if it is raining or snowing. Even a couch potato needs daily walks. Some breeds are easier to train than others. For example, herding breeds tend to be easier to train than hounds. If you are already planning to compete in any dog sports, you need to take that into consideration. Still, the bottom line will be what breed or dog makes your heart flutter, lights up your eyes, and calls out, “Take *me* home!”

Where do you find your canine companion? The answer can vary with what you want. Adorable and talented mixed breeds may be available as puppies or adults at your local Humane Society or shelter. Look for a healthy partner and, if possible, one who has had some behavior screening by trained shelter personnel. Avoid pet stores, as many of the puppies come from puppy mills and may not have had good early socialization. Plus, their housetraining may be tough because they are used to living in a cage where they also eliminate.

A purebred dog may be found in a shelter, via a rescue group, or from a reputable breeder. Avoid the breeder who keeps the dogs out in the garage or a shed and who can't tell you about health clearances. Rescue groups usually screen their dogs for health problems and temperament. Reputable breeders screen their dogs for health problems and do their best to give their puppies an excellent start in life with good nutrition, clean living

Choosing the Perfect Dog for You

Keep the following factors in mind when choosing the perfect dog for you:

- **Coat type:** Remember that *you* will be doing the grooming and vacuuming the hair (professional grooming is expensive).
- **Size:** If you have size 10 feet, a Chihuahua may not be the best choice, but large dogs cost more to feed and care for.
- **Exercise:** How much do you like to run or walk? Some dogs require several hours of exercise every day.
- **Ease of training:** Herding and sporting breeds are generally the easiest to train.
- **Temperament:** If you expect your dog to be a watchdog, avoid a party puppy.

quarters, and plenty of socialization. Don't rule out a breeder if you want an adult dog. A breeder may have a wonderful adult dog who is retired from the show ring or just not suitable for breeding and who would love to have a kid of his own.

Reputable breeders will do temperament testing to try to match each puppy with the best possible home. Such a breeder will ask you just as many questions as you ask them—maybe even more!

The Human-Animal Bond

The relationship between a kid and her very own dog is a very special one. It is a relationship of mutual trust and love unmatched by any other. Your dog looks to you as the light of his life, while you can confide anything in your dog, knowing that your secrets are safe and that he will listen to all your problems. Your dog never judges you and always stands by you—unless you make a mistake on the agility course!

Respect should be an important part of the bond between you and your dog. Even though you will always be partners, you should still be the authority figure, much like a team captain or a parent. As a pack animal, your dog is happiest with a leader—but that leader must be kind and fair. Just as your parents set limits for you, you need to set limits and guidelines for your dog.

For Parents Only

Dear parents: Your first grandchild has a furry face! This is your chance to learn how to be a good grandparent. You will need to offer advice without overpowering your child. You need to let your child assume the primary responsibility for taking care of the dog, but since we are talking about a living being, you do need to check in now and then.

As the adult, you will probably have to deal with emergencies and may be counted on for financial help. Your child may need help with training or even basic care—for example, if she has a band trip and you are left with the dog.

Also, be aware that most dogs live for 10 or more years. It is highly likely that you will be responsible for your child's dog for at least a year or two when she heads out into the world to college or her first job. Think of dog ownership as an excellent way to handle your empty nest syndrome.

The big plus here is that you get to spoil and play with the dog, just like any regular grandparent. And if the puppy has an accident, you can call on your child to clean it up!



Profile: Tom with Susan and Baloo

Tom is a kid who has had both an adult dog and a puppy of his own. Susan is a Pembroke Welsh Corgi who needed a new home when her breeder went through a divorce and had to sell her home and place many of her dogs. At the time, Susan was 8 years old and a very well-trained dog. Tom was 7 years old and ready for the responsibilities of a dog of his own, especially with the lesser commitment needed for an adult dog.

Susan fit right in, and Tom didn't have to go through the hassles of housetraining or puppy chewing. Tom sang silly songs to Susan, let her sleep on his bed, and called her his "Poochy-coo." Since Susan was already trained, Tom could go right out and compete with her. They even took Reserve Grand Champion in Open Agility at the New York State Fair.

Still, Susan had been an adult's dog, and after about two years, she decided that she basically wanted to retire and be Tom's mother's dog.



Tom and Baloo are best buddies and soul mates.

So it was time to find just the right puppy for Tom. He wanted an Australian Shepherd, and there are many good Aussie breeders in our area. Tom found a litter whose sire was owned and trained by a 13-year-old kid. He knew the sire and the grandsire, and they were excellent kid dogs. Tom used a unique method to select his exact puppy. He had his choice down to two of the lovely puppies in the litter—all healthy, and all nice according to their puppy testing. He had the two puppies held at one end of the field, and he went to the other end and called “Puppy, puppy!” One pup stood up and piddled, while the other pup tore across the grass into Tom’s arms.

Tom was 9 years old then and ready for the added responsibility of raising a puppy. Baloo came home in May, so Tom did need help with housetraining until school was out. Still, Tom did all of Baloo’s chores like feeding, training, and grooming, plus most of his walks and exercising.

Tom feels it is great to have a dog of his own. He doesn’t have to share him; Baloo sleeps on the end of his bed—keeping his feet warm—and Baloo is totally devoted to Tom. As you can see in the photo, Tom and Baloo are best buds. Tom says Baloo is special because he has mixed

eyes (one blue, one brown) and a wiggly butt, and is always willing to play—even if it is just catching snowballs. Baloo makes Tom feel happy and even cheers him up if he is sad. The biggest drawback for Tom of having a dog of his own is having to walk Baloo even if it's rainy or cold and snowy outside.

Tom and Baloo train and compete in every dog sport they can, from flyball to agility to herding and even skjoring! They have done very well in prenovice obedience and in junior showmanship—even taking Reserve Grand Champion in Grooming and Handling B at the New York State Fair.

“Baloo is my very best friend,” says Tom. “He has taught me patience and to try and be calm even in very frustrating situations.” In his case, Tom feels a puppy was the right dog for him when he was old enough for the responsibility. He feels that Baloo formed an even stronger bond with him than Susan and that an active, crazy dog is the very best match for him now.