Your New
BEST FRIEND

Adopting a Dog from the Humane Society
# Table of Contents

So, You’re Considering a New Pet................................................................. 3  
Why to Choose a Dog.................................................................................. 3  
Bad News about Breeders.......................................................................... 4  
Dogs and Children .................................................................................... 5  
The Right Dog For You ............................................................................. 7  
The Perfect Breed ..................................................................................... 7  
The Perfect Age ....................................................................................... 9  
The Perfect Temperament......................................................................... 10  
The Adoption Process ............................................................................ 12  
Finding the Right Shelter ....................................................................... 12  
Why Do Shelters Charge Money in the First Place? ................................. 13  
Why must Dogs be Spayed or Neutered? ................................................ 13  
Being Turned Down.................................................................................. 14  
Puppy-Proofing Your Home ................................................................. 15  
Safety Concerns for the Dog ............................................................... 15  
Protecting your Possessions ............................................................... 17  
K9 Supplies You’ll Need .......................................................................... 20  
Food Items ............................................................................................ 20  
Toys ....................................................................................................... 20  
Cleaning ................................................................................................. 21  
Grooming ............................................................................................... 21  
Leashes and Collars ............................................................................... 22  
Cages and Carriers ............................................................................... 22  
Vet Information....................................................................................... 23  
What to do if it isn’t Working Out......................................................... 24
Chapter 1 - So, You’re Considering a New Pet

Few people in this world love another person unconditionally. With a pet, however, this is the norm. Pets don’t hold grudges or plot revenge. They’re sad when you are sad, and they are happy when you are happy. Most people consider their pet a best friend – and it is no wonder why.

Pets can also be a lot of work, though. It is like having a child. This living, breathing creature relies on you for all basic needs. You should never get a pet just on a whim. Pets take planning and, above all, complete responsibility. Make sure that you can give your pet the best life possible before you go through with the adoption.

Why to Choose a Dog

There are many kinds of pets you can consider, but one of the most popular options is a dog. Dog’s are “man’s best friend” for a reason – they are smart, caring, and devoted to their owners. Is a dog right for you? Check out some of the main advantages and disadvantages of dogs over other common pet options:

- **Fish**: As compared to a dog, fish are simple pets. They don’t require as much money or time, even if you have a large aquarium. However, the trade off here is that a fish is not as interactive. You can play with your dog, take him for walks, and even cuddle at night.

- **Small Rodents**: Like fish, hamsters, gerbils, mice, and other rodents kept as pets are less expensive than dogs. That said, they are also less interactive, though not on the same level as fish. Don’t forget that it is also easy to lose these pets. They are not devoted to you as a dog is, so if your mouse gets out, you may never see him again.

- **Reptiles**: Reptiles come in all shapes and sizes, from tiny frogs and lizards to large snakes. One of the most major disadvantages of reptiles is that they need special heating considerations, whereas dogs (as mammals) enjoy the same environment as humans. Reptiles also frighten many people, so you may have a hard time convincing a spouse or other family member to allow a python in the house! Reptiles are a lot easier and less expensive to care for than dogs.

- **Birds**: Birds make attractive pets for some people because they can be trained like a dog, but are less labor intensive. However, keep in mind that not all birds can talk or otherwise be trained, while virtually all dogs can learn simple commands like “sit” and “heel.”

- **Cats**: Next to dogs, cats are an attractive choice. In fact, some cats come very close to having all attributes of a dog. In general, though, cats rarely learn commands and do not enjoy being taken for a walk. They’re more independent.
Bad News about Breeders

When choosing a dog, there are three main options – commercial breeders (pet shops), private breeders, or shelters. The real draw of the first two is that you can choose exactly the puppy you want. There are always puppies of every breed available, and although it costs more to purchase a puppy from a breeder, you can find purebreds that are even worthy of becoming show dogs.

That said, it is a much better option to adopt a dog from a shelter. The Humane Society and privately owned shelters take in thousands of unwanted pets every year. Of course, you’ll find problems with any adoption method, but at the end of the day, adopting your new furry friend from a shelter is a much better option than purchasing a dog from a breeder.

The main concern facing most breeding situations is the health of the dog. Although private breeders may take much better care of their animals than commercial breeders, in both cases, you risk the chance of getting a “lemon.” Breeders think of their dogs, in most cases, as possessions. They’re items to sell, not friends. Many breeders don’t care about the dogs they’re selling, as long as they meeting minimum health requirements set forth by the state. Some breeders don’t even do that.

You can find responsible breeders. Admittedly, the pound isn’t a place to go if you’re looking for a show dog. Responsible breeders are breeding not for the money or to enter any kind of market; they are seeking to improve the breed. Other qualities of good breeders are as follows:

- They belong to a local and national breeding organization, specific to the type of dog they’re breeding.
- They only breed one type of dog, and they are well informed about their breed.
- When asking for information about the breed, a reputable breeder will tell you reasons why you should NOT get the dog, along with reasons why you may want to consider the dog. All puppies are cute, but the breeder will downplay the cute factor and talk about the problems you may have.
- You’re as important as the dog to a breeder looking to sell a puppy. They don’t just want your money; they want a good match. If you aren’t screened, the breeder is probably only interested in your check.
- Sales are never final. A responsible breeder will accommodate changes in your life or problems you have with the puppy. They don’t want the dog to end up on the street.
In general, unless you specifically want a show dog, it is a much better idea to purchase your pup from a shelter. After all, while you might find a few home breeders that are responsible enough to breed puppies, you’ll often find only puppy mill situations.

A puppy mill is basically a factory to produce puppies, which are then sold to pet stores or placed in homes with people pretending to be good home breeders. These mills usually have many wire cages, sometimes stacked on top of one another. The puppies are not given playtime, bedding, or vet care.

The result is that some puppies are very aggressive while others are lifeless. All have major health problems. The puppy mill owners clean them up so that they look healthy, but in reality, you’re purchasing a very sick puppy.

**Dogs and Children**

Dogs – from a shelter or from a breeder – can be unpredictable, especially during the transition period from the shelter to your home. Some dogs can be very unreliable with children younger than high-school age, while others can be extremely helpful (think of seeing-eye dogs).

Does breed matter? Well, yes and no. Dogs are not inherently good or bad. It is the same with people – a lot has to do with their environment. Some dogs, however, do learn commands more quickly or are more prone to aggression versus submission when in bad situations. Take every dog for its own character regardless of the breed, but keep in mind that the following breeds are typically not good with children:

- Many kinds of terriers
- Australian Cattle Dogs
- Border Collies
- Chihuahuas
- Chow Chows
- Dingoes
- English Toy Spaniels
- French Bulldogs
- German Pointers
- Lhasa Apsos
- Maltese’s
- Miniature Pinschers
- Miniature Poodles
- Papillion
- Pekingese
- Pomeranian
- Toy Poodle
- Whippet
Again, this list is simply a guideline, especially because most of the dogs you see in shelters are a mix of two or more breeds. Take every dog on its own account, although you can use this as a guide.

The key is to find a dog that is not too aggressive. In a shelter situation, dogs are often aggressive because they’ve had to be on the streets or even in the shelter itself. Their previous owners may have been abusive or, at the very least may have kept a quiet household without children or other pets.

If possible, find out the dog’s history and arrange for a short visit to your home. If you’re concerned about children in the household, consider the following breeds, which are usually good family dogs:

- Beagles
- Finnish Spitz
- Golden Retrievers
- Labrador Retrievers
- Newfoundland’s
- Pugs
- St. Bernard’s
- Weimaraners

When you get your dog home, the most important thing is the safety of your children and the dog when they interact. Training is important. If the dog has had no training, make sure that you have separate areas, so that you can remove your children if the situation is threatening.

Beyond training, looking for a puppy over an adult dog can help you choose the perfect dog for a family situation. When a dog is use to a child for his or her entire life, they are less likely to be aggressive toward that child. An adult dog is more set in certain characteristics.

When in doubt, wait. Your children will grow quickly, and in five or ten years, there will still be tons of dogs waiting for a nice family to adopt them. Getting a new dog when there is a baby in the house is not usually a good idea, unless there are multiple older children to help out with the dog training responsibilities. It is much safer to wait until children are more able to handle themselves.
Chapter 2 - The Right Dog For You

Regardless of if you have a family or if you are living alone and want a dog for a companion, there are a number of puppy characteristics that come into play when making your final choice. Don’t just go to the shelter and pick out the cutest face that nuzzles your hand. Always remember, that face won’t be so cute when it is chewing your shoes! Make sure that you’re a perfect fit for your new furry friend.

The Perfect Breed

Breed means a lot in regards to choosing your new pet. Although animals have different temperaments according their individual character, some breeds have certain physical capabilities that others do not. Here are the most popular dog breeds that you’ll encounter:

- **Labrador Retriever:**

  Coming in an array of colors, Labradors are sport dogs that love to run and play. They are a great choice for families, as most are even-tempered and playful. However, if you choose a Labrador, it is important to have enough room. They’re bigger dogs, weighing around 70 pounds, and standing about two feet high. Not suited for small areas, you’ll need to devote time every day for long walks and play. Labradors are easily trained, even as adults, and live to be around 12 years old.

- **Golden Retrievers:**

  A branch of the Labrador family, the Golden Retriever is another sport dog in need of long walks. They love room to run and work well with other pets and children. With a Golden Retriever, also remember that you’ll need to have your dog groomed regularly, since they have long, shiny coats. This is not a good choice for anyone with allergies, but can make a great pet for those who want an active, playful dog choice.

- **Beagles:**

  Beagles were once bred to be hunting dogs, but today are usually kept as treasured members of the family. Few beagles are aggressive, even toward other dogs, unless they have no choice. Don’t let their small size fool you, though. Beagles need a lot of room to run because of their hunting instinct, so they don’t do well in small living conditions unless you have a lot of free time for outside play. On the plus side, the Beagle is a breed that stays healthy, requiring fewer trips to the vet. Most Beagles live to be at least twelve years old, but many live to be 15 or even older.
• **Dachshund:**

If you’re looking for a smaller breed, the Dachshund might be perfect for you. They usually weigh less than 20 pounds and are very low to the ground. You can also find miniature versions, weighing even less. There are three different varieties – short-haired, wire-haired, and long-haired, so keep this in mind when it comes to grooming.

This breed is not for everyone. Although they are lovable, Dachshunds are notoriously hard to train, even with simple tasks like using a newspaper for an accident indoors. They’re also not the best breed to have around smaller children, since they tend to nip when upset or when wanting attention. However, with the right adult owner, a Dachshund will be happy and friendly, living for around 14 years.

• **Boxers:**

The Boxer is a work dog, with its strong build and dedication to tasks. These dogs are around the same size as Retrievers, but are more demanding when it comes to space. Although keeping a dog outside all the time is never recommended, Boxers would rather live in a secure yard as long as the weather allows. Having a yard is very important with this breed.

They may be big and bulky, but Boxers do feel a strong devotion for their owners and families. On the other hand, they do commonly act out aggressively toward other male dogs, so boxers are often best kept in a one-pet household.

• **Rottweilers:**

Rottweilers often have a bad reputation for being aggressive, but the truth is that these dogs can be quite sweet with the right owner. They’re built like a Boxer, but bigger, usually weighing in at around 100 pounds and standing over two feet tall. Believe it or not, Rottweilers are usually very good with children, as long as they are trained properly and get plenty of exercise in order to burn of energy.

These dogs tend to mellow out as they age, but can be very high-strung as puppies, wanting to chew and dig often. If you socialize your dog, however, this breed should not become overprotective and, therefore, aggressive. They often work well with other dogs and cats as long as they don’t feel threatened.

• **Chihuahua:**

Made famous by the Taco Bell dog, the Chihuahua breed is actually from Mexico, and as you’ll quickly find, this dog breed has some big attitude for its little body. Chihuahuas are some of the smallest in the dog world, but they make up for it by barking to intimidate other animals. That means that a Chihuahua may not be a good choice if you have other pets, frequent guests, or close neighbors!
Chihuahuas are not especially good with children, as they are very territorial and crave full attention. Therefore, if your child has all of your attention, the dog may nip. This breed does, however, enjoy being close it its owner, so if you’re looking for a dog that you can carry around in a big purse, think about a Chihuahua!

**The Perfect Age**

Along with breed, age is important. Most dogs live to be well over 10 years old naturally, barring any major health concerns. Many breeds live to be even older, passing the 15-year mark. How long your pet lives may be a major concern to you. While most people want puppies, senior dogs also need good, loving homes. Many shelters give incentives to adopting an older dog, sometimes even waiving the adoption fee completely or offering free vet services.

You should consider adopting a senior dog for many reasons. Here are just a few of the great things about owning an “old puppy”:

- Older dogs are less likely to be aggressive. Even if they have lived in poor conditions for their entire lives, they often forego aggression because they understand that they are the weaker animals. They tend to be more mellow or submissive unless truly threatened.

- When you adopt an older dog, you’re possibly savings its life. Although many shelters have a no-kill policy, they simply cannot afford to pay for major vet bills. When faced with the option of an expensive surgery or putting the dog down, most shelters have to choose the latter option, unfortunately. There are, also, still a great number of shelters that put healthy animals down for lack of space. Seniors are the first to go in order to make room for younger dogs that are more likely to find homes.

- Older dogs often already know simple commands. Of course, if not, you can always teach them certain things, like “sit” or “stay,” but usually after 8-10 years, a dog picks that up naturally unless they’ve spent all of that time on the streets.

- By adopting an older dog, you are helping out your local Humane Society shelter. Few people adopt seniors, and as stated before, the vet bills get quite high. If you can financially afford an older pet, it may be a good option for you.

- While they still need plenty for attention, older dogs often require less time when compared to puppies. They do love to play, but are also more content to sit on your lap or at your feet. It is like an older human – they have less energy than a child. For someone that doesn’t have as much time to spend with a dog, this could be a good option.
Of course, while there are plenty of arguments for adopting a senior dog, there are also reasons you should consider adopting a puppy. Puppies are not as easy to find at shelters, as they are usually adopted out to families more easily than older, adult dogs, but because of the high number of pets available, you should have no problem finding a puppy that is right for you if that is the dog you want.

One of the best reasons to get a puppy rather than an adult dog is that you can mold them into a dog that works well with your family. Temperament is not just about genetics. You can teach a traditionally aggressive breed of dog to be cuddly and submissive, while at the same time a bad home will make a sweet dog, like a Labrador, bark and growl at others. It is a matter of upbringing.

Remember, however, that a puppy needs more time devoted to training. Assume that any dog under a year old and most shelter dogs under five years old will need to learn commands and be taught to respect their owners. This is true for any breed, not just larger dogs or traditionally aggressive dogs. You may want to consider signing up for a class with other dogs and dog owners, which will help you get professional training, as well as help you socialize your puppy.

Training isn’t the only benefit to a puppy however, and it is important to note that many older dogs can be effectively trained as well. Choosing a puppy is important for many families if they have young children. Dogs grow quickly, but when raised in a family situation, they are accustomed to small children.

The more they are socialized with a child at a young age, the less likely they are to feel threatened by that child. Remember, it is not just about safety. A dog who feels upset at a child getting attention will urinate on your items, chew things, get into the garbage, bark, or otherwise act out.

Adopting a puppy also gives you the most time possible with your pet. Although you may not be able to understand that bond now, if you’ve never had a pet before, they do become members of your family if you allow them to be. It can be heartbreaking to lose a senior dog after just a few years together, but with a puppy in good health, you can look forward to well over a decade of companionship.

**The Perfect Temperament**

We’ve talked a lot about breed and temperament, and a bit also about training and temperament, but not much about the fact that some dogs are either just mean, happy, or just overly excited. It is the same with people! No matter what, there will be people of all types in every group. Dogs are the same way.

What does this mean for you? Well, no one wants a *mean* dog, but it takes more than a happy dog to work well with you. Pay considerable attention to the temperament of the
dog when you visit the shelter. Finding a dog that “clicks” is the most important aspect of choosing an animal from the shelter.

First, think about the dog’s response to you personally. Was the dog shy or afraid? Aggressive? Playful? Unresponsive? If the dog was aggressive, don’t write him or her off right away. Often, that is the first natural response of a dog that has never been loved. After spending some time getting used to you, is the dog’s response any different?

In addition, the dog has to respond to anyone living in your household or spending time there including friends and family members. It is common for a dog to become very attached to a person he or she considers an owner, but this same dog may be aggressive towards other family members, even with training. You need to find a dog that is a good match with the whole family.

Don’t forget about your other animals as well. If you have cats in the house, they might drive the sweetest dog nuts. Remember, if the dog lived on the streets, cats were a food source. That instinct doesn’t change easily; protect the pets that you have already.

Other dogs might also be another reason to worry. Bringing a puppy into the house is usually easiest in this situation, as your older dog will naturally be in command, due to the natural succession. However, if you bring an adult dog into the mix, the two personalities may clash. There is no clear dog “in charge,” and if both animals want to dominate the household, it can become a ‘clash of the titans’.

A note about training: it can help, but it can’t completely change your dog. It is similar to starting a new relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend. You can teach the other person to clean up after themselves, but you can’t make them be neat and tidy. You can teach a dog to heel, but you can’t make them stop growling…or, at least, wanting to growl…at a passer-by.

A “mean” dog is not necessarily a “bad” dog. As this dog’s owner, if he or she is devoted to you, and if you can control the aggression, this dog may work well for your lifestyle. Guard dogs can help you feel protected and, at the very least, aggression is not too much of a problem if you are living alone.

As long as you and those around you are safe, you should pick out a dog that will suit your situation best. Temperament will vary from dog to dog, but there is one out there who is perfect for you.
Chapter 3 - The Adoption Process

Although each shelter has its own specific process, there are certain general guidelines you must meet before you will be allowed to take a dog home. Some people are actually quite surprised that adopting a dog is so hard. Shouldn’t it be rather easy, given the huge number of animals waiting for someone to adopt them?

Yes and no. Although it is important for anyone willing to have the chance to adopt a pet in need, some homes are simply unsuitable. Other times, people are not truly ready for the time it takes to raise a dog. Still others find it impossible to pay for their pet – dogs are not cheap.

The Humane Society wants to send every dog home with a family, but more than that, the Humane Society is committed to making sure that each dog that goes home with a family has a home for life where he or she will be cared for. They have the adopting process set in place for a reason – to make sure that dogs aren’t returned to the shelter!

Finding the Right Shelter

Your first step is finding a local shelter. If you are not sure where to look, check online at Petfinder.com, searching within your areas code. This is a great place to start, as you can specify what breeds, ages, sizes, and so forth interest you the most. Don’t get too attached, however, as this website is not always up to date. It is best to go to the shelter in person before you actually fall in love with a furry face you see on the Internet.

Many shelters have a website, which is linked to Petfinder.com, making it easy to find out contact information and even, in most cases, adoption information. Here are the questions you should ask before considering adoption from a shelter:

- How much will it cost to adopt my new dog?
- Are your dogs spayed or neutered? If not, must this be done upon adoption?
- Do you require new pet owners to take classes or receive counseling?
- Do you require a home inspection? If so, is there a fee for this?
- What other steps do I have to go through to apply?

Every shelter is run a bit differently, but most require you to fill out an application that answers the question as to why you want a dog in the first place. Think about your answer carefully. Why do you want a dog? It is perfectly fine to take an application and decide that adoption is not right for you. Instead, consider making a donation to the shelter or to another animal organization of your choice.

Note that private rescue groups are often even more selective as to who takes their dogs. These groups are usually privately funded and have higher adoption fees. The dog you’ll get, however, is probably a purebred, although it may or may not have papers. In any
case, it is not unlikely for the rescue’s representative to bring the dog to your home for a visit.

Why Do Shelters Charge Money in the First Place?

Some people are very surprised to find that shelters charge an adoption fee at all. Shouldn’t they be free to encourage more people to adopt a pet? Actually, charging money is more than necessary to ensure that the shelter continues running and that all homes are suitable.

The first reason is purely practical. Shelters incur major expenses every day. Not only are there vet bills with which to contend, but there are also general costs like food and other supplies. Most shelters also have employees, because there are not enough volunteers to operate it on a full-time basis. Dogs – and other animals – can be very expensive!

Your adoption fee isn’t even coming close to covering the costs the shelter has incurred due your dog being there in the past, even if he or she was only there for, say, three months. It does help to cover costs a bit, however, especially the cost to have the animal spayed or neutered.

The second reason may surprise you a bit. Shelters charge money to ensure that you are a suitable candidate for adoption. If you can’t even afford $150, which is a reasonable fee (although some are higher), how can you afford to care for your dog if there is an accident or illness? Can you even afford to take care of the dog’s basic food needs?

In addition, there are still people in this country who want dogs for unhealthy reasons. They don’t want pets, they want dogs for medical or product experimenting, forensics, and even puppy mills. These would-be owners scoop up as many free pets as they can find. An adoption fee helps to deter them a bit.

Why must Dogs be Spayed or Neutered?

In the vast majority of shelters, dogs must be spayed or neutered within a week of adoption if they are not already. As a responsible dog owner, you may not understand why. Again, there are two main reasons at play here.

First, the shelter’s main goal is to put every single dog in a home. That can’t happen if dogs continue to procreate. Although the Humane Society supports responsible breeding, most dogs reproducing today are doing so to no avail – the puppies will only fill the shelters. So, by getting the dogs spayed and neutered, they are preventing more overpopulation. After all, even if you are a responsible pet owner, what happens if your dog gets out of the yard one day? While searching for your missing dog, he could impregnate a number of un-spayed female dogs.
The second reason, again, has to do with people wanting dogs for bad reasons. Sometimes, breeders will scout for purebreds to add to their business. This is most common in a puppy mill situation. Even without papers, a dog that looks purebred is valuable. By making it a requirement that dogs be spayed and neutered, shelters are putting an end to this practice.

**Being Turned Down**

Even if you think that you are a good candidate, you may still be turned away. Instead of feeling upset, take a good look at why your application was rejected. Rarely is someone capable turned away from a shelter. If you were, it means that you might want to reconsider dog adoptions altogether, at least for now. Here are some reasons why you could be rejected:

- You financial situation is not stable enough for a pet like a dog. Take some time to save up more money or find a more appropriate source of income. That way, you’ll be able to pay for any vet bills that may need to be paid.

- You failed to provide proof that a dog is allowed in your place of residence. In most cases, you must either prove that you own your home or provide a letter from the landlord, along with contact information, confirming that dogs are allowed. The shelter doesn’t want to take back a dog after a few weeks because an angry landlord found out about the secret pooch you’ve been hiding.

- You have another dog that they fear would be aggressive and potentially harm your new dog. This is common for a representative to notice during a home inspection.

- You’re adopting a dog on a whim. If you’ve only recently considered adoption, the shelter may be worried that you aren’t going to be responsible in the long run. Continue to think about it and return in a few months. If you still want a dog then, they should allow you to reapply and this time they should approve you.

- You are moving soon. The shelter often requires you to check in with information about how you and the dog are doing. A no-kill shelter or a rescue will be especially concerned with someone moving, since they will want the dog to come back to them, should you change your mind.

If you aren’t approved, don’t feel bad. Your life right now may just not be suitable for a new dog. Instead of getting angry at the shelter, work on the aspects of your life that weren’t up to par. Eventually, you should be approved for that dog of your dreams.
Chapter 4 - Puppy-Proofing Your Home

You may have never given it any thought, but you can’t simply bring a dog into your home. This is especially true for puppies. While dogs can be your best friends, it is important to remember that they are innocent. In other words, think of them as toddlers. You won’t just bring a toddler into your home without protecting everyone (and everything) from harm!

Puppy-proofing your home should be done whether you’re bringing home a true puppy or an older “puppy” (i.e. an adult dog). Take special care to protect the dog and yourself if you adopt through the Humane Society. Remember, these dogs come from homes where they were not loved in many cases. They are also used to surviving on the streets. Dogs from shelters are often “bad” because they think they have to be to survive. With a little planning, however, you can avoid some major disasters.

Safety Concerns for the Dog

First, and more importantly, it is important to keep your dog safe. A typical house has a number of safety concerns for dogs, no matter what their ages. Many shelters perform a home visit to check for safety issues that need to be addressed before adoption is approved. Talk to your vet or another animal professional as well about things you can do to make your house safer for your new dog. Here are a few common problems found in most new owners’ households:

- Make sure that your garbage is secure. If you are currently keeping your garbage – especially for the kitchen – in an open can, either purchase a can with a lid or keep it in a cabinet or closet. Even the sweetest dog will not think twice about tearing through the trash, and there may be items in there that are unhealthy or even deadly for a canine.

- Look over your home for poisonous plants. Get them out of your garden as well, if you plan to let your dog outside – even if only when supervised. I’m not talking about poison ivy here. There are actually quite a number of plants that are only harmful to pets. Here are some of the most common plants that you should keep out of your house if you have a dog:
  - Aloe Vera
  - Asparagus Fern
  - Buttercup
  - Caladium
  - Calla Lily
  - Christmas Rose
  - Crocus
  - Daffodil
  - Dieffenbachia
- Easter Lily
- Elephant’s Ear
- Hyacinth
- Iris
- Morning Glory
- Mistletoe
- Mum
- Philodendron
- Primrose
- Poinsettia
- Tulip
- Umbrella Plant

See your vet for a complete list of dangerous plants for your pet.

- Train your family and friends before you worry about training your puppy. This is especially important with regards to food. While your dog may beg mercilessly (and many shelter dogs do because they’ve not been otherwise trained), giving him or her the desired food can result in very dangerous situations. Here are just a few of the foods that could kill your dog, even ingested in fairly small doses:
  - Chocolate
  - Onion
  - Garlic
  - Macadamia Nuts
  - Potatoes
  - Coffee grounds
  - Broccoli
  - Raisins
  - Grapes
  - Avocados
  - Nutmeg
  - Salty items
  - The Sweetener Xylitol
  - Anything with Sugar or Corn Syrup

In general, the safest policy is to not feed your dog any human food. That said, if you really want to give your dog a treat (which will not help with training him or her not to beg!), a small piece of boneless, skinless chicken or turkey breast is appropriate. Do not, however, give your dogs the bones, unless they are specifically made for dogs. The bones splinter and can get caught in the dog’s throat or stomach.

Dogs can also have vegetables. Talk to your vet – some vegetables (when raw) can actually help your dog and work better as a healthy treat option. Carrots,
yams, green beans, and lettuce can all be safely given to your favorite pooch as a treat.

- Consider your door and yard. A new dog, especially one from a shelter, will be more prone to escape, because they won’t know where “home” is, so they may become lost to the streets forever. Is your yard fenced in? If not, you must prevent your dog from getting out of the house in the first place. Consider an electric underground fence if you don’t want to put up a normal fence. Over time, the dog will learn to stay in the house, but for the first year at the very least, dogs can escape quite easily.

- Keep your cables out of reach. Dogs like to chew, and electrical wires are the perfect consistency. However, when chewed, your furry friend could get a shock, and if eaten, the cables can be deadly. Pick up wires or run them under carpeting, so that your new dog isn’t tempted to chew on them.

- Make sure that your medications are safely out of harm’s way. Dogs are simply curious. If they see something that resembles food in any way, they’ll give it a taste, and some drugs, like ibuprofen, are deadly even in small doses. Remember that your dog can jump to get to something he or she wants. Keep all medication in a cabinet that cannot be opened. This applies also to alcohol, cigarettes, and “stop smoking” products like patches and gum.

- Think of your dog as a baby when it comes to small objects. If your dog is prone to chewing, a toy box can be a treasure trove of items. While you may be upset if large items come out of the situation with teeth marks, smaller items like Legos can be dangerous for your dog to swallow and then pass. Other items lying around in your house are always at risk. Remember, a dog doesn’t know what is food and what is not.

- Supervise children with puppies. Although you may be more worried about your new dog biting your child, an immature child can also accidentally hurt a new puppy. Until the dog is grown or your children are mature enough to understand how to handle a dog, always stay in sight.

- Close off balconies and raised decks. Dogs will jump if they see something they want, like a bird or squirrel, and falls from up high can kill a dog. Stairwells and pools can also be dangerous. Until you know your dog well, simply stay watchful. Dogs find all sorts of ways to get into trouble!

**Protecting your Possessions**

After you have protected your dog from your house, it is time to protect your house from your dog! There are two main problems dogs have with possessions – urination and chewing. Dogs can be extremely expensive if you have to pay for new items often!
Start with controlling urination. At first, a dog may simply urinate inside because he or she doesn’t know what to do. You have to teach your dog to wait until your let him or her out. If the dog never had a loving home, housebreaking may need to happen at an old age. Most dogs will not, however, urinate in their own space unless they simply cannot wait. Therefore, crate training can be quite effective. You can also work on paper-training your puppy, which is a good idea if you spend time out of the house.

Keep in mind that indoor urination can be a sign of some serious medical condition. If your dog begins peeing in the house after he or she was trained, see your vet right away. You may also want to see a vet if your dog training has been to no avail.

In the beginning, protect your items from urination as much as possible. The carpet is a main concern, but catching the problem quickly is usually fairly easy. Clean up as soon as possible using commercial products that were specifically made for pet accidents (these will also help fight the smell). If your puppy is in the process of being trained, it may simply be best to confine him or her to a single room where there is no carpet to ruin.

The other major problem is chewing, which, as already mentioned, is dangerous as well as annoying. Puppy-proof your house as much as possible by keeping things out of reach, but beware that some puppies simply love to chew and are not above chewing on molding, furniture legs, and other items you can’t put out of reach.

You can try using a deterrent. These powders and sprays have unpleasant tastes and odors to the dog, although you shouldn’t notice a difference. In most cases, however, a puppy is not chewing for the taste. Therefore they may continue to chew items simply because they need to chew!

Chewing is not a “bad” behavior. Teach your puppy to chew on the right items. If your puppy loves to chew purchase him or her chew toys and scatter them around the house. Whenever you catch your dog in the act, scold him or her, take away the item, and replace it with a chew toy, then praise the dog for chewing that particular toy. Avoid giving your dog old items, like socks or shoes, to use for toys. They’ll not notice the difference between the old socks or shoes and your good ones!

In all, protecting your items is mostly about giving your new dog attention. Dogs ruin items because they are bored or want you to play with them. Very few dogs receive lots of attention and are still bad. If you’re having major problems with your dog ruining your items, crate training is a great idea when you’re not home. However, the more time you can devote to your dog, the better.

On a side note, it is important to mention that dog hair is a problem for many people. However, this should not be considered a dog ruining your possessions. When you get a dog, no matter how long his or her hair, shedding will occur. Be prepared to vacuum often, and if you are really worried about it, talk to the shelter about what options you have with dogs that shed the least amount possible. Train your dog to stay off the
furniture and have him or her professionally groomed often, but remember that pet hair is a part of living with a dog!
Chapter 5 - K9 Supplies You’ll Need

Before you bring home your new puppy, there are a number of essential items you need. In general, you should expect to spend at least $300 on dog supplies when you first buy a dog, which of course depends on the size, health, and age of the dog. You don’t need to pamper your pooch with items like designer bedding, some old pillows and blankets will be fine, but there are a number of costs you can’t cut. Keep in mind, that some of these supplies will need to be purchased on an ongoing basis. Before you adopt, sit down with your bank account and make sure that you really can afford a dog!

**Food Items**

First, and most importantly (at least, to your dog!), you’ll need to be prepared for the cost of food. When you first get a dog, you’ll also need to get at least two bowls – one for food and one for water. These bowls should be relative to the size of your dog. If your pup is prone to chewing, metal options are best over plastic. You may also want to get additional dishes for water if you have a large house. This will help to deter toilet drinking.

The biggest expense you’ll have with your dog is food itself. You can choose wet food or dry food or a mixture – there are advantages and disadvantages to each. Most pet owners choose dry food, as it is more convenient, but for dogs with health concerns, wet food may be best. Smaller dogs will, of course, eat less. When you purchase dog food read the packages carefully. Look for the right food for your dog’s weight and age, and if you are unsure about what to buy, speak to your vet. Find the healthiest option available for your dog. You may spend a little more money on it now, but you’ll save in vet bills in the future!

**Toys**

Toys may seem like an afterthought, but I list them second for a reason – you must buy them for your dog. No matter how much you love your pet, you can’t play with him or her 24 hours a day. A bored dog starved for some fun will cause trouble, and unfortunately, many pets end up at the pound every year simply because their owners didn’t have enough time for them. By having lots of toys, you can ensure that your pet is well occupied.

Toys come in all shapes, sizes, and price ranges. Outdoor toys like balls and Frisbees are great for dogs in the sporting group. Smaller dogs may like smaller versions, and you can find soft balls that can be thrown in the house. Of course, most dogs also love squeakers! Dogs may also like toys that can be used in tug-of-war, so rope options are readily available.
If your dog is prone to chewing, look for toys specifically for that purpose. Otherwise, you’ll find yourself replacing toys often. In general, dog toys are made to be safe to the animal, even if ripped, but it is a good idea to throw away any toy that has a hole or is coming apart.

**Cleaning**

Where there are dogs, there will be messes. No matter how well trained your dog may be, he or she will still cause cleaning concerns. Often it is a matter of trial and error to find the products you like best. Make sure, however, that they are either safe for pets or that they are locked away when not in use.

Don’t forget also that you’ll need to clean outside. Dogs don’t use the litter box! Although a good rain will wash away any remains, you may want to purchase a small scoop and get rid of it yourself. Remember, you’ll also be expected to clean up after your dog in the park or on the sidewalk.

Lastly, don’t forget hair products. Your pet will leave hair around the house, no matter how well groomed, so you might want to consider attachments for your vacuum cleaner that are great at removing pet hair. A small lint roller by the door is a good way to quickly clean your clothing before leaving the house as well!

**Grooming**

All dogs, no matter what their coat looks like, must be groomed. You can pay a professional to do this on a monthly basis, but home care is still necessary. Before you bring your new dog home, make sure you have the following grooming items in your house:

- **Dog Shampoo:** If you intend to give your pet baths at home instead of paying for professional grooming, this is a must. Do not use human shampoo, which can be harmful if a dog licks it or if it gets into a dog’s eyes.

- **Towels:** You can use old bath towels you have in your house instead of buying new towels just for the dog. The important thing is that you actually have towels. Dogs can quickly become cold and ill if they are wet when the weather isn’t particularly warm. This is especially true for puppies and small breeds.

- **Ear-cleaning Supplies:** A dog’s ears get dirty just like a human’s. However, because they are so sensitive, it is a good idea to ask your vet to show you how they should be cleaned so you don’t do any damage.

- **Dental Health Supplies:** Yes, you should brush your dog’s teeth. You’ll need a puppy toothbrush as well as toothpaste made especially for dogs.
• Nail Trimmers: Your dog’s nails should be trimmed regularly, which will prevent damage around your house, personal injury during play, and infections of the nail. You should see your vet to learn how far to clip back your dog’s nails.

• Brushes: Choose brushes for your dog according to hair type. You’ll want one for general brushing done daily, one to help your dog shed hair in the spring, and one for checking for fleas and ticks.

**Leashes and Collars**

All dogs should be taken outside daily, even if you have a huge house with plenty of rooms to run around in. Even if your dog is well trained, a leash and collar are absolutely necessary whenever the dog leaves the house. In fact, your dog should be wearing a collar at all times, even when in the house, in case he or she sneaks out the door.

When choosing a collar, think first and foremost about comfort. You will most likely need to upgrade your collar as your puppy grows into a dog. Avoid choosing a collar that is too large so that there is room to grow. This can be dangerous if the collar gets caught. At the same time, avoid choosing a collar that is too small and could be uncomfortable or ineffective.

Leashes should be strong enough to hold back your dog, so a large dog may need a much stronger leash. Chains are a good investment, especially if your dog likes to chew and would be prone to chewing through the leash to break free. You can also consider retractable leashes, which allow your dogs to roam ahead on a walk when possible, but be pulled in close if needed.

Instead of a typical collar, you may want to consider a harness for your dog, especially during training. A harness will help you have more control over the dog and will prevent neck problems. Harnesses are also good for some breeds that have back and neck problems.

**Cages and Carriers**

Even if you plan to let your dog roam free while you aren’t home, it is important to have a cage or crate. There will simply be times when the dog needs to be locked up for a moment. For example, if your friend is bringing her new baby to visit, you can put the dog in the crate for a few hours to ensure safety.

For larger dogs that need to be transported by truck or SUV, a cage can double as a carrier, although you may want two so that you don’t have constantly move them. For smaller dogs, you can also find carriers that are easy to transport by hand. There should
be one carrier for each animal in your household. Although they may be the same sizes, you never know when all of your pets have to be taken to the vet at the same time.

Look for cages, crates, and carriers that are the appropriate size for your dog. When in doubt, larger is better. A dog should be able to stand and turn around in the confined space at the very least. For any cage where the animal will be kept for longer than a short car ride, even more room is necessary.

**Vet Information**

A vet isn’t something you have to “buy” per se, but it is very important to have a vet’s information in order before you bring home your new dog. If you’ve never owned a dog before, don’t be afraid to call often with questions. A vet can help you determine what is normal and what is not.

In all states, dogs must be registered and have certain vaccinations as a puppy. If you’re adopting a young dog, be aware of these rules. The shelter should provide you with up-to-date vaccination information, which can then be given to your vet.

After your dog is fully grown, he or she still needs an annual check-up, even when healthy. This preventative care is fairly inexpensive, and you’ll find that it saves you money in the long run. At the annual check-up, your vet will do much of the same things that a doctor would do at a human’s annual check-up.

Be sure to keep your vet information in a place close to the phone. Emergencies are not uncommon with pets, so you should know how to reach help quite quickly. Find out the vet’s office hours as well as what to do if your animal needs immediate attention at night or on a weekend. Most vets are affiliated with a local animal hospital that is open all hours of the night for just such emergencies.

There may be a number of vets in your area. Choose the one that is perfect for you and your new dog. If possible, first consider the vet that had previously been caring for the dog. They are the best choice in most cases because they know the dog’s history and the dog may already feel comfortable around them. Also consider price, location, and specialties when choosing a vet for your new best friend.
Chapter 6 - What to do if it isn’t Working Out

Sometimes, no matter how much you plan for a new dog, it just doesn’t work out. If you’ve done all you could to ensure that you were responsible with the pet, don’t feel bad. Some dogs and family just don’t work out. Here are the most common reasons it doesn’t work in the end:

- **You suddenly and unexpectedly experience a life change immediately after getting the dog.** Keep in mind that when you adopt a dog, you are responsible for it. However, if, right after adoption, you experience a personal hardship like the death of a spouse, a house fire, or so forth, it may be best to talk to the shelter about taking the dog back. Some things are out of our control.

- **The dog poses a safety threat to you or someone in your family.** No matter how sweet a dog may seem at the shelter, they sometimes change when at home. If the dog is so terrorized that you cannot care for it at all, it may be best to ask someone from the shelter to help you take the dog back.

  It is important to note that you shouldn’t make this decision in the first hour of adoption! Give the dog a few days to get used to the new environment. If the dog is still snapping at you or even flat out attacking you, make the call.

- **Someone in your family has an allergy.** Although you should check this first, occasionally, someone in your family may be allergic to just one kind of dog hair. If you legitimately did not know this before adopting the pet and have tried to fix the problem, contact the shelter.

If you must return a dog, always take it back to the shelter, breeder, or rescue mission where you got it. In fact, in most adoption contracts, this is a requirement. When you adopt a dog from a shelter, it is that shelter’s responsibility to ensure that you are giving that dog a good home for life. You can’t give the dog away to a friend or return it to another shelter. Not all shelters have the same policies, so make sure the read the adoption contract and keep a copy on hand.

Note that it is NOT responsible to return a dog because you didn’t have the time, because the dog got sick (unless you were tricked into purchasing the dog and didn’t know about health problems), the dog is too expensive, the dog isn’t trained, etc. These are all things you should have realized before adopting a pet.

No matter what your reasons for returning the animal, most shelters have a 14-30 day return policy where you can return the pooch with no reprimands. They understand that not every dog is made for every family. Be aware, however, that you may not get the adoption fee returned. Some shelters issue “exchange” tickets so that you can adopt a different dog for free if one becomes available, but most will not refund your money. That is the chance you take when you adopt a dog.
It is a good idea to schedule an overnight visit before even considering adopting a specific dog. Talk to the shelter. If you have been approved to adopt a dog, ask if you’d be allowed to have the dog in your home for a day before making a final decision. Most shelters will be eager to allow you to do this, as it shows that you are being responsible with your adoption decision.

After all, when pets are concerned, responsibility is key. Never jump too quickly when it comes to adopting a dog, especially if you’ve never had a pet in the past. Although dogs can bring a lot of joy into your life, they can also take up most of your free time and money. As a responsible potential pet owner, it is your job to make sure that the home you’re providing is one that is loving. Before you adopt, give it some thought for a few weeks. Adopting a dog is a big step, and it is important to make sure that you are ready.