

How To Pick The Right Dog

In this edition of Obedience Tips, we're going to take a break from training and talk about the steps involved in choosing your new dog and where your new dog should come from.

Initially, you should give some serious thought to key issues that will help you pick a dog that's a good match for you and your home:

1. Will you have time to spend training your dog? **ALL DOGS REQUIRE TRAINING**, but some require more time than others. All puppies need lots of training so the age of the dog you are looking for is important too.
2. Do you live in a small home or a big place? Some dogs love cozy homes while some dogs need to run and dig.
3. Do you have young children and need a dog that is normally tolerant?
4. Do you live close to neighbors who may complain about excessive barking?
5. Does anyone in your family have allergies? No dog is "hypo-allergenic", but some dogs can be tolerated well by people with allergies.

The best way to determine which type of dog is best for you is to do a little homework first. Search the Internet, read books from the library, visit local dog shows, or even watch for dog shows or dog programs on TV.

So now that you've determined what type, size, age of dog you are interested in or you've determined that specific traits are not important, now you should choose where the dog should come from. If you would like to adopt a dog, you should visit local rescue or adoption groups. Some rescue groups handle specific pure-breeds while other groups handle all types of dogs (animal welfare groups and animal shelters). Be cautious of adopting over the internet without meeting the people you are dealing with and **STAY AWAY FROM PET STORES**.

Assuming you are adopting or rescuing a dog from a rescue or shelter group, here are some basic questions to ask before you fall in love with your new best friend:

1. Has this dog ever shown aggression toward people or dogs? This question is very important and if the agency you are dealing with is not sure or if they think the dog might have some mild aggression issues, you should think about moving on to a better choice unless you have the time and skills to manage the issue.
2. Why was the dog put up for adoption?
3. Is the dog housebroken?
4. Was the dog in a home with children or other dogs?
5. Was the dog an inside or outside dog? Be cautious of outside dogs. They may not be well socialized and could be excessive barkers.
6. Are there health records or histories available?

If you are interested in adopting a purebreed dog from a breeder, remember that not all breeders are created equally. There are many wonderful breeders that only want to breed the best dogs and want the best homes for them. There are just as many not-so-wonderful breeders that want to breed dogs to make money. Again, stay away from internet sales where you cannot visit the breeder or their dogs in person and **STAY AWAY FROM PET STORES**. So how do you pick a good breeder? Here are some keys:

1. Visit local dog shows. Talk to breeders of the breeds you like. Good breeders enjoy talking to polite people who want to learn and be educated.
2. Research the internet for breeders in your area and contact them for a visit.
3. Ask potential breeders for references. Good breeders will be eager to tell you about dogs they have placed in other homes.
4. Talk to breeders about current and future litters. Be careful around breeders that have bred the same female multiple times in a year.
5. When talking to the breeder, listen to the questions they should be asking you. Good breeders will be interviewing you too and are more interested in placing their dog in a good home than in making money. Be careful around a breeder that just talks about the terms of the sale.
6. When you have decided that a breeder is right for you, ask to talk about the terms of the contract. The contract should specify terms that guarantee initial temperament and health. Most good breeders will also require that you return the dog to them vice selling or giving the dog to anyone else in the event you can no longer keep the dog. Beware of breeders that say, “We don’t need/use contract”.

Hopefully, this will give some things to think about when choosing to add a new dog to your family. As always, if you have any questions concerning this article or any of the other training articles, feel free to contact me or Three Notch Vet. Happy training!