



# How to Choose a Puppy

Make Sure the Puppy You Bring Home is Right for YOUR Family

A dog's age, breed and temperament, combined with your lifestyle and personality, all play an important role in determining what kind of dog is the best fit for you. Adopting a puppy has certain advantages—you can choose a dog with the best temperament for you and ensure they get a proper early education. But puppies bring added responsibilities, too, requiring more of your time than an older dog for housetraining, socialisation, feeding, and entertainment.

If you do not have the time for a puppy, consider adopting a full-grown dog. But if you're sure that you are ready for puppy ownership, consider the following:

## STEP 1: BREED

Are you:

- **Active and outgoing?** Do you have a large home, backyard or park nearby? If so, a **larger-breed dog** may be the best choice for your family.
- **Less outgoing?** Do you live in an apartment or have small children or other small pets? You may want to consider a **smaller dog**.

**Do your research on the characteristics different breeds tend to display.** But remember that while breed can have an impact on a dog's personality, you should base your decision primarily on what you know about the puppy's background and what you observe about his temperament.



## STEP 2: TEMPERAMENT

**Temperament has less to do with a dog's size, breed or upbringing—temperament is something innate in a dog.** It helps determine how easily they can be trained, and while good training can improve certain traits in a dog, training does not change a dog's temperament.

**There are clues to what a young pup's temperament might be:**

- Within the litter, watch how the puppies run and play to determine where each puppy stands in the litter's pecking order. More confident puppies act assertive by standing over the other littermates. Less confident puppies act submissive by rolling over or lowering their heads.

- If you are considering a puppy at a shelter or rescue, find out as much as you can about their background and behaviour from staff members and volunteers who have walked or played with the pup. Ask whether they're been socialised with other dogs and how they behave in a variety of situations, such as during feeding, walking, and being put in a crate or kennel.
- Also observe the individual puppy you are considering when they are alone with you. A well-adjusted puppy will follow you freely when you lead them.
- Drop a soft glove or cloth near the puppy and watch their reaction:
  - A confident puppy will approach the object immediately to investigate. While this puppy could grow up to be a well-adjusted dog, they are likely to be strong-willed and might be a challenge for a soft-natured person.
  - A less confident pup may jump and move away when the object is dropped, but will usually return fairly quickly to investigate. Less bossy than the more confident puppy described above, this puppy will most likely make a great pet.
  - The puppy that takes longer to approach and runs around the object acting as if it is alive and might attack is a little timid, but should still make a wonderful pet with proper, gentle training.
  - The puppy that barks at the object, runs away and crouches down or refuses to return to the spot has a more nervous temperament and could be a difficult pet. More patience will be required during training.

**Finally, lift and hold the puppy in your arms. A pup that settles in and remains still is likely to be calmer and more easily trained than one that wriggles and tries to escape.**

## **STEP 3: TRAINING**

**Once you've chosen your new addition to the family, be sure to start training as soon as you bring them home.** By introducing the expectations and rules of your household early, they will quickly acclimate and feel more comfortable and secure.

**Just like people, puppies come in all shapes, sizes, and temperaments. Do a bit of research first, then visit your local shelter.** Determining what breeds and temperaments would be the ideal fit for your family will help ensure that the puppy (or dog) you bring home will become a permanent part of your household.

