

# am I ready for a dog?

*by Karen PeakPrint this page  
West Wind Dog Training, Australia*

Am I ready for a dog? Before I can answer that question I need to take the time and consider the following:

## **Want**

Why do I want a dog? Do I want a companion to share my life with or do I want a status symbol to show off to my friends and impress them? Do I want a dog I can hunt with or do sports with? Or do I want a lawn ornament so I can be just like everyone else? Do I need something to make me look good? Or do I want a devoted companion and want to put the effort into making this relationship happen?

## **Time Commitment**

Can I devote the time to properly raising and training a puppy? Can I commit to the next 10-15 or more years to this animal? Will I take the time every day to properly exercise the dog, train and socialise or find someone to help me out if needed during the day if I am not home? If I cannot devote almost as much time to raising a human child, I am not ready for a puppy. I will also be willing to take the time to wait for the right dog to show up. If I am impatient, I am not ready.

## **Cost**

Can I afford not only the cost of a puppy from a reputable source, but can I afford all the things a pup needs from training classes, food, toys and vaccines? Will I pay for a dog walker or day care if I work full-time? Can I afford at least \$600 per year in general upkeep? Can I afford medical emergencies or the care for chronic health problems? Do I realise there is no such thing as a cheap dog? Can I remember that one goes to a shelter to save a life, NOT to get a cheaper pet? Will I accept all the costs - financial and emotional that go along with dog ownership?

## **Lifestyle**

Am I active or sedentary? Will a breed that can go jogging and hiking with me, or a breed that is a couch potato best suit me? Just because I like the looks of a dog does not mean it is the right match for my lifestyle. Am I willing to adapt my lifestyle to fit the dog, even if it means not going out after work or partying all weekend? Will I take the dog to various activities such as Agility classes instead of hanging out with my buddies all the time? Will I do what is needed to see the dog gets what he needs even if it impacts my lifestyle? Or am I going to be selfish and keep my life status quo, even if the dog is miserable?

## **Research**

Will I take the time to seek out all the information possible about the dog I am looking for? Will I take the time to research breeders and rescues and find the best one to work with?

## **Experience**

How much dog experience do I have? Do I realise that many breeds seen in movies or on television are not the best choices for a new dog owner? Do I realise that these dogs have high energy needs and may be more than I am willing or able to handle? If I do not think I have the experience to own the dog I like, will I find someone to help me learn?

## **Human Medical Issues**

Does anyone in my family have allergies to dogs? Or is there anyone in my family who has a medical condition that could affect the amount of time I am capable of spending with the dog?

## **Housing**

Am I willing to let my dog live in my house and be part of a family as every pack animal needs to be? Or am I going to leave him outside all the time where he can be at risk of theft, pranks, developing nuisance barking or even biting a child who comes to the fence to say "Hi" when no one is home to stop it? Am I willing to take the time to teach the dog how to live harmoniously in the house?

## **Grooming**

Am I willing to brush a dog at least weekly? Am I willing to bathe when needed? Am I willing to take care to trim nails and clean teeth or find someone to do all the grooming needs for me? How much fur can I handle? Am I willing to put up with shedding?

## **Long Term**

What will happen to the dog should I marry? Am I willing to find a spouse who shares the same animal values I do and who will welcome my dog and me as a unit? What if we have children? Will I be able to take the time to properly prepare my dog for the new addition? What if my job requires moving and travel? Can I fairly keep a dog and am I willing to do what is necessary to keep the dog happy while I am away or make arrangements to bring the dog along?

## **Golden Years**

Am I willing to make the dog's senior years comfortable? Carry him up and down stairs if needed? Put up with senior issues like a leaky bladder? Am I willing to take short walks with him so he feels as if he is still useful even if he can no longer be my jogging partner? I can always jog after our walk while the dog sleeps can't I? Am I willing not to be selfish? When it is time to say goodbye will I send him painlessly and with my arms to comfort him to the Rainbow Bridge? Do I realise it is not fair to ask him to hold on, just to hold off on my pain of saying goodbye? Can I be selfless when the time comes?

Am I ready for a dog? And if I am not, am I willing to listen to my brain and NOT my heart? Am I willing to do the right thing and not take on the responsibility of a new life if I am not fully prepared to accept all the fun and pain and work?

## **Things to consider if you are looking for a second dog:**

What sort of dog would my current dog like? What types of dogs do they get along with/not get along with?

Am I prepared for the extra time and effort associated with a second dog? Remember two dogs are THREE times as much work as one - you have to dedicate time and energy to each individual dog and there are also issues associated with dealing with two dogs together.

Have I considered/planned what will happen if I:

Travel? Two dogs = more expensive boarding.

Move? Two dogs require more space.

What will happen if the two dogs don't get along? Sometimes dogs are not best friends straight away - am I willing to deal with and manage two dogs that may not like each other? If not, what will happen to the newly adopted or existing dog?

Ideally dogs will get along best if they feel they do not have to compete - that means a dog that is of a different age, sex and even personality to your existing dog would tend to be best.

## **Are you ready for a new dog?**

Maybe later... maybe now is NOT the right time to get a dog. Dogs are a very big responsibility. If you change your mind after getting a dog, or your family decides it wasn't a good idea after all, it will be the dog who suffers.

Please, think twice before you get a dog. You and your family should understand these things about living with a dog:

- Dogs need obedience training.
- Dogs need exercise.
- Some dogs get big.
- Some dogs bark a lot.
- Some dogs jump on people.
- Dogs get lonely when they are by themselves.
- Dogs can get sick and mess up the carpet.
- Dogs can't always understand what you are saying.
- Dogs can run away.
- Dogs shed hair.
- Your friends or family might be allergic to dogs.
- When you walk a dog, you have to pick up the mess.
- Dogs can chew furniture.
- Dogs can chew your belongings.
- Dogs can get sick and cost a lot of money at the vet.
- Someday your dog will die.

Remember these things about dogs. If any of these things bother you, maybe a dog is not the best pet for you.