

How Do I Choose the Right Pup?

Bringing home a puppy is a once-in-a-lifetime experience... and a life-long commitment! Here's a handy guide to help you choose the right puppy for your home.

By Tanya Kane

So you've finally decided that the pet you want is a dog. Make sure to have considered all the pros and cons of getting a new pet before you take on the responsibility. Bringing home a pup is a once in a lifetime experience. Even if you've had dogs before, do bear in mind that each dog is unique!

Here are some simple ways to help you choose the right pup.

- Find a very reputed ethical breeder or a good home litter that belongs to a family.
- Ensure that you are able to meet both the parents of the pups. The mother and father should both be healthy -- physically and mentally. Good-natured and well-socialised mother dogs will nurture secure and social pups. If the father is living with the pups, then the father should also be a well-balanced dog.



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- Check physical health, especially in terms of genetic issues like dysplasia, congenital heart conditions, etc. An ethical breeder will not breed dogs that have genetic issues. Look for clear eyes, wet nose with no crusty discharge, and a happy, energetic disposition.
- Observe the pups; observe how they play and interact with each other. Observe which ones approach you immediately, which ones are slightly shy, and which ones refuse to come and meet you. Puppies should be curious and interested in all the things that are going on around them.
- While you may feel like the one that approaches you chose you, understand that this is actually the most confident of the entire lot, which will mean that he will also need confident handling through his life. The slightly reserved pups that take some time to approach will actually be the ones that are easier to handle. But the very shy pups that refuse to come near you (this should not happen if the mother is well-socialised), are actually the ones who will need some socialising work going forward.
- Pups that are bullying their siblings will also usually be top dogs as they grow. While this pattern can continue to change if the siblings live together (usually post 60 days), most will go to new homes and no longer have dogs to sort out the hierarchy. Be aware of what kind of dog you want. How they play with each other, who wins and who loses, etc. will give you an interesting glimpse into what kind of personality the pups have.
- Neither the one that wins nor the one that loses in such games is the right dog or wrong dog. What is important to understand is the kind of lifestyle you lead and whether this pup will fit into it. If you lead an active lifestyle and engage in a lot of high-energy activities, then a confident, energetic dog is probably the right fit for you. Alternatively, if you sit in front of the computer most of the day, then a slightly calm, shy, and sleepy dog may be the right fit. Find a personality that matches yours!



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- What kind of surfaces do the pups have access to? The mother instinctively teaches her pups to leave the nest when they need to eliminate. A good, knowledgeable breeder will ensure the mother has different surface areas to do the same. This teaches pups to not eliminate on the surfaces they sleep on very early on in life and very easily as well. They immediately distinguish between hard, tile surface as non-soiling and grass/mud as a place to eliminate.
- A good breeder will also introduce different textures and toys to the pups. Find a pup that is motivated with toys. Going ahead, a toy-motivated dog is always a treat to work with!



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- If you have another animal at home, talk to the breeder to understand what kind of socialising the pups have been exposed to.
- While choosing specific breeds, understand the breed before making a choice. Some breeds are meant to be guard dogs, they will bark. Some breeds are meant to be companion dogs and they may not always be the kind to alert you when someone is at your door. Some breeds are great with children, some not so much. Some breeds cope better in packs than alone. Choose wisely, according to what you want.
- Some breeds have higher maintenance than others. Educate yourself completely.
- Check grooming needs of dogs and understand what your future pet will need.
- Also ensure nobody at home has any known allergies, or else choose a breed that is hypoallergenic.
- Please be responsible and avoid dogs that are not fit for your local weather conditions.

- Ensure that the pup you want to take home is completely healthy and has been given vaccines as per schedule. Never separate the pup from the mother before the first 50 to 60 days. These days are crucial and the mother dog also teaches them important lessons like toilet training, bite inhibition etc.
- Ensure you visit the puppies at least twice or thrice at different times before making a final choice. This will ensure that you get to know them a little better. One that was sleeping the first meeting may finally be the one you choose when you meet the third time. Give the process some time. A good breeder will be equally patient with you and encourage the same.
- Finally, if you feel you are not able to make a choice, don't be afraid to seek help from a reputed canine behaviour expert. A good behaviourist will help you find the right pup to suit your lifestyle.

Keeping in mind the above will definitely ensure the right choice of a pup. Together, you can both have your happily ever after!