

Dog Personalities by Breed

Things to Consider When Adding a Dog to Your Family

By Brenda Barnette, General Manager

When adding a new dog or cat to your family, there are many practicalities to consider. Would you like a new baby who requires frequent meals and lots of training, or are you looking for a mature pet whose personality is known to the staff and volunteers, whose size and appearance will not be a surprise?

What is your lifestyle – are you a homebody or a traveler? Cats tend to be solitary and adjust well to being left alone for longer periods of time than a dog. An indoor kitty will also have a litter box, so potty breaks are not an issue.

Kittens are typically the most active, however be sure to check with the shelter staff regarding the kitten's personality because kitties are real individuals. Adult cats generally get along well with young children. These wise felines are capable of leaping to the top of a bookshelf when play becomes too rough and tumble, while a kitten may be overwhelmed and bite or scratch, perhaps even being injured.

If you are considering a dog, it is important to be realistic about your schedule and activity level. The best dog for an avid hiker is quite different from the perfect companion for a person who likes to curl up with a book.

A little knowledge of the breeds or mixes that made a dog you are considering may be helpful in determining which breed or mixed breed will best fit your lifestyle.

Sporting types, such as the Irish Setter, Golden Retriever and Labrador Retriever, are best known for their hunting instincts in the water and forest. They have a gentle nature and make great family pets, however without regular exercise they can become overweight diggers, chewers and barkers.

The hound type includes the Blood Hound, Afghan and Beagle. When Elvis Presley sang "You ain't nothin' but a hound dog" he must have been referencing that although hounds love people, these dogs follow their instincts and may be a challenge to train and keep safe at home.

The working dogs includes the Akita, Mastiff and Portuguese Water Dog. These dogs have helped humans through the ages however their strength and training requirements may make them unsuitable pets for the average family.

The terrier type dogs are feisty and energetic like the Cairn Terrier or the larger Airedale Terrier. Terriers make delightful family members and are best suited for a family prepared for a challenge and armed with consistent training habits and a sense of humor.

The small or toy dogs includes such favorites as the Chihuahua, Pomeranian and Toy Poodle. Although small, these little dogs often have a big attitude. They prefer constant companionship and may travel on most airlines as carry-on "luggage" that slides under the seat.

The non-sporting dogs include the Boston Terrier, Chow, Dalmatian, Tibetan Spaniel and Bichon Frise. These dogs vary in personality, size, shape and coat.

The dogs who herd includes the Border Collie, Australian Cattle Dog and Welsh Corgi. These dogs make excellent companions if they are well trained, although their herding instinct can be very problematic. The image of a Corgi (less than 12 inches tall) driving a herd of cows by leaping and nipping at their heels may be worth considering if you are attracted to herding dogs.

I have worked and lived with cats, purebred dogs and mixed breed dogs for over 40 years. I love them all for a variety of reasons. Purebred dogs make lovely family members, though many are performance-driven animals needing jobs to be kept happy and out of trouble. Most mixed breed dogs reflect the characteristics of the different breeds they resemble – perhaps mellower in their behaviors and easier to live with.

Consider your own lifestyle as you search for a new feline or canine family member. After all, you are selecting a friend for life. In the words of Roger Caras, " Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole".