

Sourcing a dog or puppy

The decision of where to obtain a dog is ultimately yours, depending on what you feel will fit in with your family as well as how much time you are able to commit.

Adult dog or puppy?

One of the major decisions that you will make will be whether to look for an adult dog or a puppy to join your family. There are pros and cons to both, and different families will be suited to different options.

Puppies are often thought of as a best option because they can be a 'clean slate' to mould within the family. However just like people, no two puppies are the same; they will grow up to look and behave differently, dependant on personality of that individual and the experiences that they have. Puppies take a lot of time and energy, and will go through 'puppy phases' some of which children can struggle to cope with. Be prepared to put in all of that work; from settling pup into the home, working through phases, housetraining, gradual introductions ('socialisation') as well as basic to advanced training. Puppies should not be left alone for a long time: practicalities of housetraining does not allow for this, it can also be detrimental to pup's development.

Equally, adult dogs will still need a lot of time to settle the dog and family together harmoniously. No dog will be the 'finished product' upon first arrival, it is just that you get out what you put in. Look for the potential as well as what is in front of you at the time.

Whether you are looking for an adult dog or a puppy, remember that temperament is more important than the training the dog can do, or looks. Whether it is a puppy or an adult dog, look for:

- an individual who is motivated (this may be through interest in food, toys, attention)
- an individual who is keen to see you and your family
- a character that will fit in with the needs of your family
- a person (breeder or rehoming staff) who is knowledgeable



Where to source a dog or puppy

There are different avenues to explore when you are looking to source a pet dog: breeders, rescue centres, assistance dog organisations and so on.

A responsible breeder could be the most realistic option if you decide you want to get a puppy, or if you have a specific breed in mind. To find a responsible breeder, or learn more what makes a responsible breeder, please refer to the Kennel Club Assured Breeder Scheme

<http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/item/2101>

A reputable rehoming organisation can be a good route for obtaining an adult dog. Please do be prepared to work with the staff at the centre for some time, you will rarely find that right dog upon your first visit.

Private adverts are not a recommended way to find a dog - you will have no guarantee that the dog will turn out to be what is described, either in health or behaviour. You may also be pressured to take the dog after your first brief meeting, which gives you no time to think through your decision and learn whether that individual dog will suit your home or not.

Breeders– what to expect

- The breeder should give you the opportunity to see the puppy at least with its mother and the rest of litter. This allows you to assess the temperament and size of the adult dogs, and the way the breeders care for the dogs.
- Have the opportunity to see all the puppies and be able to handle them, rather than just seeing the puppy being offered to you.
- Allow you to see where the litter spends most of their time, and who with. This will allow you to assess how easily the pup will adapt to your home set up.

For example, do they live in the home or a shed?

how much time do they spend being handled?

how often do they come into contact with children?

- If the dog is advertised as Kennel Club registered, you should ensure that you take receipt of the Kennel Club Registration Certificate. You must then proceed to apply to the Kennel Club to transfer your dog into your own name. Please be aware that you will require the signature of the breeder(s) to complete this. If the registration certificate is not available at the time of purchase, ensure that you receive an undertaking in writing from the breeder that this will be sent to you when available.
- It is recommended that the breeder provide you with a Contract of Sale. Amongst other things this should detail both the breeder(s) and your responsibility to the puppy.
- Written advice on feeding, exercise, worming and immunisation.
- Copies of any additional health certificates for the sire and dam. Just like humans, some breeds of dogs can be affected by inherited conditions. The Kennel Club and the British Veterinary Association offer three canine health schemes, which aim to detect and monitor certain inherited conditions. It is important that you are aware of these conditions and know the right questions to ask of breeder before buying a puppy.
- See the RSPCA downloadable puppy pack for really helpful guidance on what questions to ask and information to get from the breeder <http://puppycontract.rspca.org.uk/home>.

Rehoming centres

There are many rehoming (rescue) centres. Some are small, independent organisations and others are part of nationwide networks, like the Dogs Trust. Each may have their own policies and procedures which you will become aware of in the rehoming process. Whilst many rehoming centres work with a variety of breeds and ages of dogs, there are also some specific breed rescues which each work with a particular breed of dog.

Dogs will come to rehoming centres from private homes where owners are no longer able to meet their pet's needs, and as strays. Strays will come with an unknown history, and so there will be little or no information about what they are like in the home environment.

Staff should have carried out assessments over a period of at least a week, and actively want to share this information with you. The advantage of a dog from a home is that staff should have taken a detailed account of the dog's previous experiences and behaviour in the home environment. Importantly, you will also know what experience the dog has had around children.

The ideal option from a rehoming centre would be a dog that has come from a home with children, or had regular contact with visiting children, and who has been comfortable and happy in this environment.

Ask to speak to a member of kennel staff who has worked closely with the dog as they will have first hand experience. Make sure you visit the dog at least twice, and enquire as to whether it is possible to take the dog for a walk.

Don't allow yourself to be pressured into taking a dog home with you the same day, or falling for a dog simply because it has a sad history. It is in everyone's interests that you find the right dog for your family.

See ' Adopting a rescue dog' handout for further information on finding the right dog and the process of rehoming.