

You've made the big decision: your life isn't complete without a dog. But now comes the hard part - which dog? The selection of dogs can be overwhelming. Dogs come in a variety of shapes, sizes and personalities. But you need to remember that there are some dogs that would not fit into your lifestyle and you need to find a good match to be a lifelong companion.

The Calgary Humane Society can offer a wide variety of dogs from which to choose. Obviously, knowledge of his history and background will vary. It is important to talk to the Adoption staff at the Calgary Humane Society about a dog that interests you and how they feel he will meet your needs and expectations. Ask for their assistance and be prepared to make several visits before you find the "Right One." The time and effort required to give an animal a second chance can result tremendous satisfaction and a very special love -- both from and for the dog.

Don't adopt on impulse. The sad eyed puppy may tug at your heart; remember that once that first thrill is over, you may regret that your head did not overrule your heart. This is not fair to the dog or you.

When Looking for a Dog. . .

Prior to embarking on a search for the perfect dog for you, you should have in mind what kind of dog you are looking for. You should consider:

SIZE: Typically bigger dogs require more space and a secure fenced yard.

GROOMING (and vacuuming): Some breeds require regular professional grooming. Short haired breeds can require less grooming than long haired breeds but both shed. There are a few breeds that don't shed.

TEMPERMENT: Research about different breeds so that you will have an idea of personality and natural instincts. Keep in mind that each dog is an individual, but they will have breed traits and tendencies. If you are looking at a mixed breed look up both breeds. Friendliness, assertiveness, and compatibility with children also come into play. Some shelter dogs may have special needs and may require more training and patience.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS: Try to match your lifestyle to the physical requirements of the dog. If you are a couch potato do not look for a young active dog.

TIME REQUIREMENTS: Dogs require food, water, exercise, care, companionship and mental stimulation everyday.

HOUSEHOLD CONSIDERATIONS: Can you have a pet where you live? Does everyone in the house want a new dog? Do you have any animals currently in the home and how will they adjust to a new dog? If you have another dog, both dogs need to meet prior to making a decision about the new dog. Who will care for your dog when you are out of town?

FINANCES: Food, veterinary bills, licensing fees, training, toys, kenneling and unexpected emergencies can add up very quickly.

You have to analyze your own preferences, lifestyle, living space, hobbies and time. Think before you adopt. Some dogs are better for you and your lifestyle than others. Take your time and make a good decision. Dogs can live to be over 15 years old and you want to provide a lifelong home and enjoy the companionship and incredible rewards that a well matched dog will provide.