

5 characteristics to consider when looking for a new dog

Dogs have been faithful companions to humans for hundreds of years. Dog owners know their canine companions can be friendly, affectionate and entertaining. Dogs also are quite intelligent and can perform various jobs that help them stay focused and healthy.

Anyone considering bringing a dog home might be wondering which dog is best for them. Every dog is unique, and a breed that is a perfect fit for one person or family may not be the right choice for another. The following are five characteristics to consider when searching for a new dog.

1. Energy level

Dogs require different levels of exercise and are sometimes classified by how much energy they are likely to exert.

A working breed like a German shepherd, for example, may need more exercise than a dog that is known



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Various characteristics merit consideration when shopping for a new dog.

to lounge more often, such as a basset hound.

Talk through exercise expectations and be realistic on how much time can be devoted to walks and play sessions before narrowing down breeds.

"Are you looking for a running partner or Netflix partner?" asked Marissa Molnar, certified veterinarian techni-

cian at Monongahela Animal Hospital, 321 Hazel Kirk Road, Monongahela.

"Kids play a big factor as well," she noted. "Also, to be considered in terms of expenses is grooming. Smaller dogs need groomed and maintenance more frequently. Short hair breeds require a couple baths a year but not consistent grooming."

2. Size

The larger the dog, the more indoor and outside space the animal will require. Larger dogs also will need more food and larger toys and sleeping spots. They also may be more difficult to walk if they are particularly large and strong compared to the individual doing the walking. Some people may want a dog that can be easily transported in a carrier when traveling. Therefore, size is an important consideration when looking for a new dog.

3. Health predispositions

Though predisposition to certain health issues may not be too great a concern with mixed-breed dogs, purebred animals are another story. For example, RSPCA Pet Insurance says pugs and bulldogs, as well as other brachycephalic (flat-faced) dog breeds, may experience

overheating because they have trouble panting to cool off. Some brachy dogs are predisposed to skin, eye or oral health conditions. Other dogs may be more prone to allergies or hip dysplasia. It's important to do your homework on breeds and identify potential health issues a given dog may be predisposed to.

"Lifestyle is a critical factor in determining what type of dog a person or family need to consider when looking to purchasing a dog," said Kayla Reynolds, a technician at 498 East Maiden Street, Washington, "It's also important to research different breeds to have a better idea of what type of dog works best for the purchaser."

4. Grooming needs

Coat will determine how often or how much grooming a dog will require. Dogs with double coats may need to be brushed regularly to avoid matting and to help with the shedding process.

While certain dogs are billed as hypoallergenic, this really isn't a thing. Allergies often form from exposure to dog dander or the oils on their skin, so reduced propensity for shedding will not remove the chances for allergic reaction entirely.

5. Personality

It is important to read the breed standards on dog disposition. While personality will be affected by breeding and how the animal was raised, inherent traits may make some dogs act a certain way across the board. Dogs bred to be watchdogs may be more aloof or wary around strangers. Dogs that are bred to do jobs like herding may be more independent. Other dogs are family-oriented and bigger lovebugs, which is why Golden retrievers are so popular among families. Speak with a qualified breeder or veterinarian about which dogs will best fit a particular lifestyle.