



Adoption Success Tip Sheet

We want to help you and your new companion live long, healthy lives together.

Selecting a Pet

Set yourself up for success. Think about your family's lifestyle, financial situation, space restrictions and time limitations to ensure you choose the right breed, size and activity level for your new companion. Some questions to ask yourself include:

- *Who will be the primary caregiver?* This person will need to feed/provide water, exercise, take the animal to the veterinarian, groom and play with the animal. Are they ready?
- *Can I afford it?* Food, toys, medical care and other supplies can add up. Prepare a budget and allocate necessary funds for your new pet's needs. The ASPCA estimates it costs approximately \$400-\$700 per year to care for a dog or cat.
- *Does my family work or go to school for more than 8 hours per day?* Dogs should not be left alone for long periods of time. They need to go potty outside! Dogs can often suffer from boredom if left alone, and boredom may escalate to unwanted behavior.
- *Do I live in an apartment or a house with a yard?* A cat or a small breed of dog may be better suited for smaller spaces. Always check pet policies, including size and breed restrictions, with your landlord prior to adopting a new companion.
- *Do I have children?* Not all animals enjoy the company of children, or they may do well with older children rather than toddlers. It is important to introduce your children to your potential new companion prior to adopting to watch their reaction. You can also allow your children to interact with animals of friends or family to guide them on how to properly pet and play with a dog or cat. Children and animals should be introduced slowly and the animal should be given the space and time he or she needs. Never allow children to interact with eating or sleeping animals.
- *Do I have other companion animals?* Be prepared for some disagreements between your new siblings. This is normal but can be minimized with slow, controlled introductions between animals. Pick up toys and food to reduce possessiveness. For dogs, try the first introduction in a more neutral place like a dog park or backyard vs. at the front door. For cats, it's helpful to have a defined space for each cat. New companions and existing companions should be kept separate for the first several days, and new animals should never be left alone with existing animals until fully assimilated into the family.

- *Will I be willing to exercise the animal regularly?* All dogs need regular exercise, but puppies, large breed and active dogs need exercise daily to ensure good behavior and health. Walks and fetch sessions are good ways to ensure a happy, healthy dog. Cats need stimulation, such as with toys, furry mice or climbing structures, to keep them fit and happy.

- *Am I In It for the Long Haul?* Many companion animals can live 15 years or more. During this time, you may move, change jobs or experience other life changes. In addition, your pet may have medical or behavior issues arise. Are you willing to commit to your new pet and ensure he or she stays with your family through all of it?

Preparing Your Home

Dogs and cats need a cozy place to sleep, food and water bowls, treats, toys and a collar, among other things. For dogs, you'll need a leash. Consider a crate as well. Crate training is helpful for housebreaking puppies or for dogs being introduced into a new environment. Having the right supplies on hand reduces stress for everyone!

Selecting a Veterinarian

All companion animals need regular medical care and should be vaccinated annually. Ask friends and family with animals for a recommendation or look for clinics accredited by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA).

Have Identification on Your Companion at All Times

Proper identification will help ensure your animal doesn't become part of the 85 percent of lost animals who never find their way home. Have your dog/cat microchipped, and attach a rabies tag and ID tag with your phone number on their collar. Be sure to register and keep the information updated so if your animal is lost it can be easily reunited.

Behavior Issues

Be realistic. Most animals need some training, whether by you or a professional, to help them become a well-adjusted companion. Use positive reinforcement vs. punishment. Realize that most animals don't misbehave because they're bad or trying to displease you—they may be acting out to get your attention, because they're not exercised/stimulated enough, because they're bored or stressed, or because they don't know what you want them to do. Be patient, consult training resources or contact a reputable trainer. You may also want to consult with a veterinarian to rule out medical causes.

Do you need more information? Contact the Humane Society of Lake County. We're here to help!

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