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Choosing a Pet

Each type of pet is different in terms of care, feeding, behavior, cost, housing and demands on your time. If you are educated about the animal before getting it, you'll be more likely to have a happy animal, a positive human-animal bond, and an easier time dealing with any challenges that might arise.

Questions to Ask Yourself Before Getting A Pet

- What type of animal is the best fit for your lifestyle and your home?
- If you have children, how will the pet affect them?
- If you rent your living space, do you have permission from the property owner for a pet?
- How much space do you have inside and outside your home to accommodate your pet's needs?
- How much time do you have to spend with your pet and provide care?
- What is your activity level? Do you want an active pet?
- Have you reviewed the costs for a pet? Do you have the financial resources if your pet has a medical emergency or unexpected veterinary bills?
- Do you have a caregiver if you must be away from your pet for a long period of time? If not, how will you provide care for your pet when you travel?
- Do you have other pets? Will everyone in the home welcome a new animal?
- Where will you get a pet? A rescue organization, animal shelter, pet store or breeder? Please consider adopting from your local shelter! Most shelters have wonderful adoptable dogs, cats, rabbits, and other small animal companions.

Animal-Proof Your Home

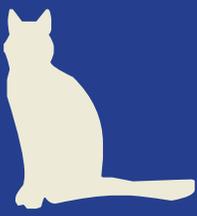
Is your home ready and safe for your pet? Is your home or yard appropriately dog-proofed or cat-proofed? Some common pet safety concerns include: electrical cords, house plants (several are toxic if ingested), some garbage can contents, etc. Use a crate, exercise pen, or safe room to confine your new pet when unsupervised or for gradual introductions to other pets in the home.

Puppy or Dog

Adopting a puppy is a huge commitment. You cannot leave a puppy home alone all day due to their need to eliminate every few hours or so. If puppies are not handled often and socialized when they are young, they can easily become shy and fearful. Dogs need quite a bit of interaction with their humans in order to be happy. If you're very busy and spend little time at home, a dog might not be a suitable pet for you, unless you can bring your dog along when you're away from home. You'll also need to spend some time training your dog to respond to basic commands. Carefully consider what kind and age of dog to get. If you're thinking about getting a particular breed of dog, you should read up on the breed before deciding what type of dog to get. Different breeds of dogs have different personalities. Whatever age or kind of dog you choose, keep in mind that you are making a long-term commitment. On average dogs live ten years or more!

Kitten or Cat

Though most cats don't require as much attention as dogs, they still need care, social time, love, and play time on a daily basis. Spending time every day with your kitten or cat can grow your bond and can sometimes make the difference between a happy and a bored cat. Indoor cats generally live longer and healthier lives than outdoor cats. You might consider adding a screened enclosure such as a porch or cattery so your cat can enjoy the outdoors safely. Cats can live fifteen years or more. Be sure that you can provide lifelong care.



Rabbit

Rabbits, like all pets, need daily care. A rabbit must be handled gently and taught to be comfortable with being held. Rabbits are prey animals and prefer calm home environments. They need a large living enclosure and prefer to have many ways to run and hide from danger. Rabbits can be good companions for children as long as their living accommodations are appropriate and handling is always gentle and supervised. The approximate lifespan of a rabbit is between six and thirteen years, so make sure you are ready for a long-term commitment.

Bird

Birds are not the best pets for beginners. Birds are a lifetime commitment as most types of small birds, such as a parakeet, live a minimum of fifteen years and large birds, such as a parrot, average fifty years or more! Birds are social creatures and need regular interactions. Feathered friends are very messy and require time for cage cleaning often. They also require a special diet and a special veterinarian. Be sure to prepare in advance before bringing a bird into your home.

Ferret

Similar to birds, ferrets are not low-maintenance pets. They require a particular diet, daily interactions, and constant cage cleaning. They need to explore and exercise and should not be in a cage long-term. Ferrets need play time and exercise outside of their cage but must be supervised. Belonging to the weasel family, ferrets have distinctive, engaging, playful, and curious personalities. They are not a perfect pet for everyone because of their strong personalities, care needs, and fairly long lifespan - eight to ten years.

Gerbil, Hamster, Mouse or Rat

These small rodents are all great for beginner pet parents. Gerbils are great to watch but not always the best for young children to handle because they are so quick and agile. Young children often want to handle them, but have a difficult time holding them without squeezing them. They have a short lifespan of two to three years. Gerbils are diurnal, like us, meaning they are active during the day and sleep at night. Not all small rodent companions keep the same hours as their humans, however. Hamsters, mice and rats are nocturnal by nature, but these animals can still make great pets! These social creatures will often stay awake to interact during the day and likely stay active through most of the night. Similar to gerbils, these animals have short lifespans of about two years.

Guinea Pig

Guinea pigs can make good first time companions. They are gentle, talkative, social, prey animals by nature. Shy at first, they are happy to graze freely and roam, with safe ways to escape and hide from danger. Be sure to consider their lifespan, which can be up to eight years.

Chinchillas

These nocturnal animals need a large cage, dust bath, and other care essentials. Typically, they aren't happy living alone, so it is best to adopt them in pairs. Chinchillas need exercise time out of their cage in a safe and supervised environment. If handled gently and housed properly, chinchillas can make fun, interesting companions. Consideration must be given to their longer lifespans of approximately fifteen years.
