



Before You Adopt & Tips for Adopting a Pet

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The decision to adopt a pet can be both an exciting and stressful time, as you carefully consider which animal is right for you. The following tips can serve as a helpful guide as you navigate this decision process.

One of the first things to determine is what type of pet you want. Are you looking for a dog or a cat or perhaps an exotic animal? It's also important to think about why you want that pet. Are you looking for a laid-back companion or an active running partner? Be sure to factor in the age and activity level of the animal to best suit your lifestyle. For example, a young Labrador retriever may not be the best match for someone seeking a calm couch potato. Shelter workers can help direct you toward the right pet for your personality.

It is extremely important to consider the financial implications of pet ownership. Owning a pet is a long-term financial commitment. It is worthwhile to consider pet insurance or an emergency fund for your animal.

You'll want to plan ahead for the cost of food, litter boxes, toys, beds, crates, veterinary care, and training. Regular vet visits are essential to ensure your pet is up-to-date on vaccinations and disease preventatives. In the long-term, you'll end up saving money throughout the life of the animal, and your pet will be healthier. Your veterinarian also can serve as a useful resource. Training is also important. Puppies, in particular, can benefit from socialization training. Be sure to choose a trainer who uses positive reinforcement techniques.

Pet ownership can be incredibly rewarding in many ways. Enjoy this new chapter of your life with your new companion!

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Tips for New Pet Adopters

Congrats on your new family member! Thank you for supporting your local shelter. This can be a wonderful, yet stressful time, as you and your new pet bond and learn more about each other. Here are some tips to help you get started:

Stock Up

Make a list of supplies to purchase for your pet. Food and water bowls, beds, toys, collars/ID tags, and proper food are all essential. Cats require litter boxes (one more than the total number of cats in the household) and scratching posts. Dogs should have leashes. Crates can provide a safe spot for your pet and are a great option for traveling to the vet or on vacation.

Start a Relationship with Your Veterinarian

This is perhaps the most important relationship you will establish for your new pet outside of your family. Your veterinarian can be a resource for health and wellness for your pet, not just for emergencies. We recommend making an appointment with your veterinarian soon after adopting your pet. The animal will need a full physical exam and might need follow-up vaccinations, fecals, or testing. This is also a great time for your vet to get to know your pet and for you to ask questions.

Take Some Training Classes

Not only are training classes fun for you and your dog, but they also help provide important skills for your new pet to navigate the human world. For puppies, this can provide safe socialization. Be sure to ask your veterinarian about good courses that use positive reinforcement training. Courses can include obedience and agility training, therapy dog training, nose work, and even games. We want our pets to be excited about learning. Learning about cat behavior is also important. They can learn to do tricks and interact with you like dogs!

Be Patient

Your pet is adjusting to a new place. He or she will need to learn your schedule and may take some time to adjust to a new routine. Cats might hide for a couple of days. There might be some accidents that are normal during this transition. Remember, never punish a dog for eliminating inside. You should reward the dog for going outside. If you notice the dog eliminating inside the house, take him/her outside and reward him/her for finishing in the appropriate place.

Introduce Slowly

Do not force your new pet to interact with your other pets immediately. They need to get used to each other first in short interactions. It is good to set up a room for your cat that is separate from your other pets. Cats might need to interact through a gate before feeling comfortable. They can also swat or hiss, which is normal. Dogs should be able to interact with each other for brief amounts of time in a neutral place. These should be short, positive interactions. And they should not be left alone until they are comfortable with each other.

Remember to ask for help if you need it! Feel free to contact your veterinarian, trainer, or shelter if you have any questions. Everyone wants you to have a positive relationship with your new pet.