



What to Ask Before Adopting a New Dog

Remember to consider your family's lifestyle:

- Do you have children living at home or children that visit regularly? Have they ever lived with a dog before? Does the dog you are considering have a known history of living with children? Young children are at the highest risk of being injured by dogs. At the OMHS we take safety seriously. If a dog does not have a known history with children, we will often be looking for a home with older children or adults.
- Has your family ever owned a dog before? Some shelter dogs often have training requirements that can be a challenge to first-time dog owners. Consider choosing a shelter dog that is recommended for first-time dog owners or one that does not have extensive training requirements.
- How much time is the dog expected to be on his/her own? Puppies cannot hold their bladder for a full 8-hour workday. Some dogs are prone to separation anxiety and will benefit from a family with a flexible work schedule.
- How much time will you be able to spend with the dog? What time of day (morning, afternoon, evening)? Will this change in the near future (i.e., school starting up again)? On days where something comes up and you cannot spend time with the dog, how will the dog's needs be met?
- Who in the family will be responsible for feeding, training, and exercising the dog? In cases where children in the home are expected to take on responsibilities, how will parents divide responsibilities when the children lose interest, become too busy with after-school activities, move away to college, etc.?
- How active are you and your family, realistically? You want to choose a dog that meets your activity level, not the level you wish you were at. Gym memberships are relatively easy to cancel. Re-homing or surrendering a dog due to unrealistic expectations is damaging to the dog and upsetting for the family.
- What type of activities do you enjoy? Hiking, camping, running, etc.? Are these activities appropriate for the dog you are looking at? For example, some breeds are not suitable to be off-leash; other dogs are more prone to heat stroke, breathing issues, arthritis, and hip dysplasia, etc.
- What grooming will the dog need? Are you prepared to bring the dog to a groomer regularly, or would you rather a dog with a lower maintenance coat?
- Have you spoken to your vet about the breed or age of dog you are looking to adopt? Make sure you learn what illnesses or ailments are common to the breed and what vet care is expected for that age of dog. Some ailments you may not be prepared to deal with. Knowing this also gives you the ability to set up a plan with your vet on how to monitor or prevent the illness (i.e. if the dog is predisposed to allergies, ensure he/she is fed a suitable diet; if the dog is predisposed to arthritis, make precautions and give supplements; etc.)

Remember to plan for training of your new dog continued:

- Will your current pets get along with this new dog? How will you introduce them? Do you have a suitable way to separate them in the beginning until they can be trusted together?
- Do you plan on going to professional dog training classes? Will you hire a professional private trainer? At the OMHS we recommend that all dogs attend training classes that use positive methods, including lure-and-reward training and clicker training. Avoiding training schools that use force and intimidation will result in a dog that trusts and respects you and your family as their leader. Training classes are also very important for socialization. Many shelter dogs were not socialized properly as puppies and being exposed to other dogs and people in a safe, nurturing environment such as a training class can be very beneficial.
- What types of behavioural issues are you prepared to deal with? How would you deal with them should they arise? For example, barking, house soiling issues, separation anxiety, resource guarding, etc. For more information on behavioural issues, please speak with Robin, our Animal Behaviour Coordinator, or your Adoption Counselor.
- Is your house “puppy-proofed”? Half the battle of training is to ensure that undesirable behaviours do not occur. The best way to ensure this is to prevent them by managing the dog’s environment. A dog that is crated when alone with interesting and safe toys to chew on cannot get into the garbage, chew on your new couch, dig up your garden, or have an accident on your beautiful oriental rug.
- What will the house rules be? It is a good idea to have the house rules written down. Rules can include whether the dog is allowed on the couch, where he/she will sleep, where he/she will eat, where he/she is expected to stay while the family eats, what games are okay to play, if he/she should sit and wait at doors, which rooms are off-limits, etc.
- What are your training expectations? For example, do you expect the dog to heel on walks, or are you happy if he/she walks nicely without pulling?
- Where will the dog’s “safe place” be? A crate? A gated-off room? If the dog is not being supervised, they should be somewhere where they cannot practice undesirable behaviours.
- Where will the dog be expected to go to the bathroom? For puppies, how often will you take them out? Puppies can (on average) hold their bladder and bowels in hours, the number of months they are plus one. So, for a 3-month old puppy, they should be able to hold it for 3-4 hours. Is someone home to take them out as often as they need?
- Dogs need to learn how to chew appropriate toys. Is this dog a big chewer? What types of toys will be required? How many should you get? Variety is the spice of life, and dogs enjoy it too!

Most of all, remember to ASK QUESTIONS if you have them! Do not hesitate to contact the Adoptions Department at the Oakville & Milton Humane Society at 905-845-1551 ext. 147 or adoptions@omhs.ca