

Preparing For Life With Your Adopted Dog

(NAPSA)—Each year, approximately 7 million pets enter U.S. shelters. Unfortunately, 3 million of them are euthanized—but you can help change that. Save a life by choosing to adopt your next dog and consider these tips.

Step 1: Test the waters

Before committing to adopting your own dog, volunteer to pet sit for a friend or foster from a shelter. You can care for a dog while it grows or recovers from illness or surgery. Plus, you can help save lives by freeing up space in a shelter.

Step 2: Do your research

Find vet offices close to home and your job, as well as low-cost spay/neuter clinics in case your dog isn't already fixed. Check out breed restrictions where you live to ensure that when you bring your new dog home, there are no barriers to unconditional love.

Step 3: Make a plan

Plan a budget to make sure your new dog gets what he or she needs. These costs can range from pet sitters to training classes, and from food and bowls to collars and a leash. It's also important to think about potential vaccinations and microchips to keep your new dog happy and healthy. While loving an adopted dog comes with a cost, the lifetime of love in return is invaluable.

Step 4: Choose your companion

While it's impossible to predict which dog will steal your heart, it can be helpful to research breeds ahead of time that fit your lifestyle.



Find your 'forever' friend at a local rescue shelter.

Consider things like energy levels, grooming maintenance required and the ideal age of your companion before going to the shelter. For example, a corgi's high energy is a great complement to an outdoorsy lifestyle. However, an older dog may be a better fit for a low-key environment. If your heart is set on a purebred, you'll be glad to know that about 25 percent of dogs in shelters are purebred.

Welcoming an adoptable dog into your home is much more than just daydreaming about petting your neighbor's pup. When you adopt, you not only save a life, you also enrich your own. By bringing home a new best friend, you can be a part of PetSmart Charities' mission to end pet homelessness in a generation. And don't forget about feline friends. If a dog isn't the right fit for you and your family, there are plenty of loving cats and kittens ready to call your house home.

For more information, go to www.petsmartcharities.org.