

ALL ABOUT
dogs

Responsible Ownership

A dog's love is unconditional, and that is why they have been a favorite human companion for hundreds of years. Before you decide to bring a dog into your home, there are many things to know and understand to ensure a positive experience for both you and the animal.

As an owner or possible owner, we tend to only consider the fun and rewards of having a dog, but we also have to consider the lifelong responsibilities. It takes serious dedication of time, money and love.

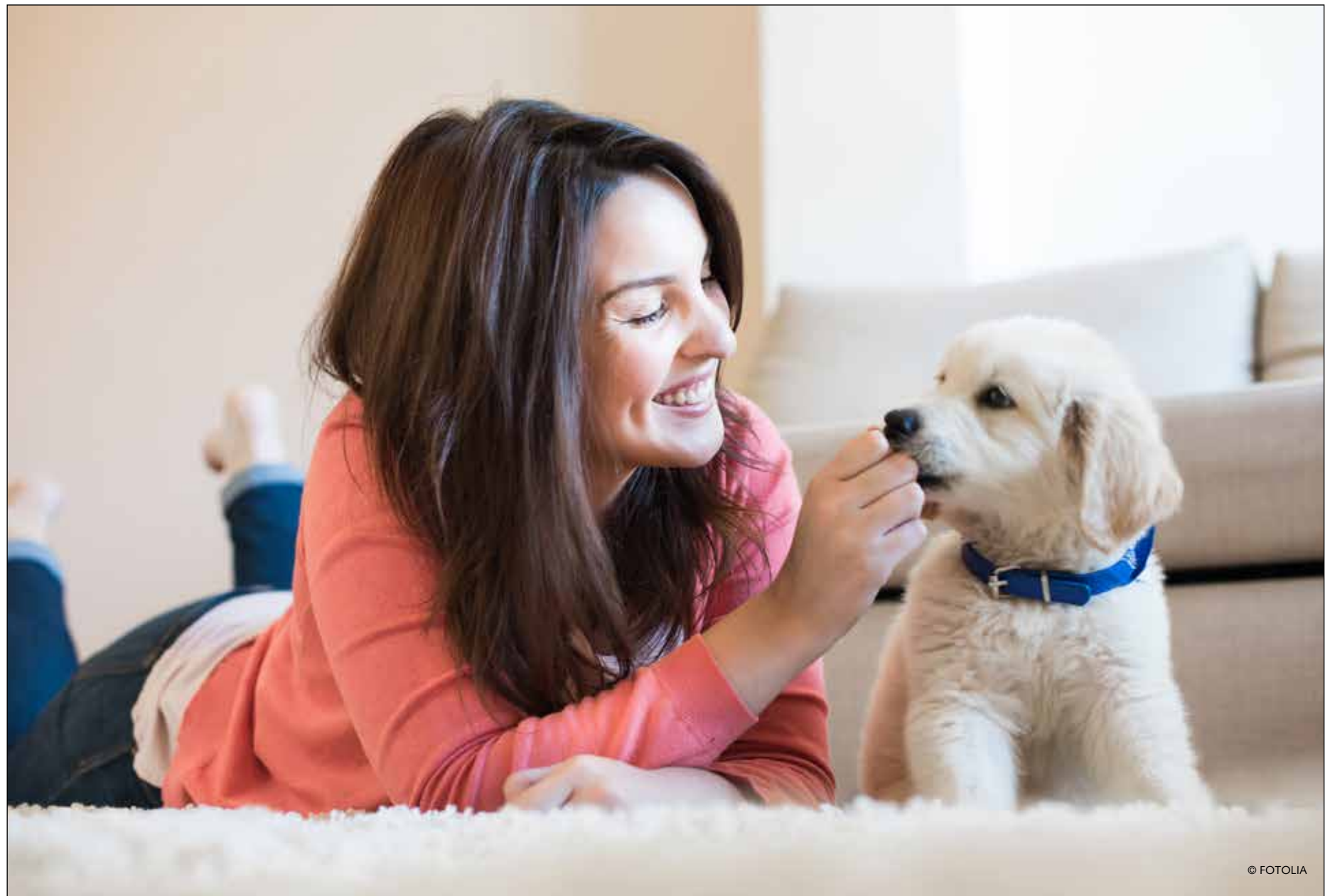
Your dog should be compatible with your lifestyle in regards to energy level, grooming needs and temperament. That's because if you bite off more than you can chew with a new dog, you may end up becoming frustrated with the responsibilities of ownership.

If you have children, it is imperative that your dog loves kids, although you should always supervise play with children, especially very small children.

DOG CARE/HEALTH

Dogs depend on us for their welfare for their entire life. We have to provide basic needs such as proper food, water and shelter from the elements, as well as regular bathing and grooming.

Dogs require regular check-ups from their veterinarian for required vaccinations and prevention of flea and heart worm infestations. These can be big expenses for the dog owner, so be sure to consider your financial flexibility when deciding whether or not to own a dog.



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KEEPING TABS ON YOUR DOG

Safety and training go hand in hand when it comes to responsible dog ownership. Your dog should wear an identification tag with your name, address and phone

number at all times. Permanent microchips and tattoos are options, too.

Consider also keeping a current picture of your dog on hand. You never know when it could come in handy. All of these steps are important in

case your dog gets lost.

Dogs are living creatures that feel pleasure and pain just like a child, and they deserve the best of care. If you think you are not up to the task, delay the decision about buying a dog for a

while. Further down the road, your life circumstances might change enough to allow for dog ownership.

If you already have a dog, evaluate how you care for your dog and readjust if necessary.

The Great Dane

There is something powerful and breath-taking about a Great Dane, and according to the American Kennel Club numbers, Americans are smitten with these gentle giants. They are the 15th most popular dog breed in terms of ownership in the U.S.

The breed has several colors, a medium energy level as well as its signature large size. Adults can weigh more than 100 pounds. Such large features contribute to its relatively short lifespan of six to eight years, according to the American Kennel Club.

CHARACTERISTICS

Danes — also known as gentle giants — generally are laid-back animals with soft spots for kids. A Great Dane can make a great addition to a family looking for a big dog that is people oriented with a passion for playing.

Because of their overall strength and size, owning a Great Dane is a big-time commitment that takes serious attention to detail and dedication to safety.

Protection and security also are great selling points of a Dane. Any intruder who tries to enter a home will find out quickly that these dogs are very protective of their families and territory — gentle giants or not.

CARE TIPS

Here are some tips from the AKC on Dane care:

- Try not to overfeed and let them get overweight because this will eventually cause mobility issues and shorten their life span. It is necessary



to provide clean, fresh water at all times.

- Regular baths and grooming are essential. This includes trimming their strong, fast-growing nails, cleaning their ears and regular tooth brushing.

- They need regular exercise,

too. Make sure you are up for that task before bringing home a Great Dane.

DANE HEALTH RISKS

The majority of Great Danes are healthy dogs, but there are health concerns to be aware of as they could hamper your

dog. These can include hip dysplasia, eye disease and cardiac disease, according to the AKC.

Danes and other deep-chested breeds commonly incur stomach issues. Two meals a day and regular exercise will help keep these

threats under control.

As always, check with your veterinarian if you are concerned about a health issue. He will be able to walk you through preventive measures you can take to ensure a healthy, productive and enjoyable life for your Great Dane.

Your Dog's Teeth

Taking care of your dog's teeth is part of being a responsible pet owner. Good oral health contributes to your pet's overall wellbeing. Just as in humans, the teeth and gums can be gateways to health issues if not cared for properly.

If your pet's teeth are not maintained, serious oral issues can develop. According to the Veterinary Oral Health Council, here are a few signs of oral and dental diseases:

- Bad breath;
- Loose teeth or teeth that are discolored or covered in tartar;
- Shying away from you when you touch the mouth area;
- Drooling or dropping food from the mouth;
- Bleeding from the mouth; and
- Loss of appetite or loss of weight.

At the first sign of any of these issues, it is critical that you schedule an appointment with your veterinarian. These professionals are trained to spot these issues and walk you through simple steps for treatment and overall maintenance.

HOME DOG DENTAL CARE

How many times have you heard from your dentist that prevention is the best tool against gum disease or rotting teeth? The more you do before issue sets in, the better. Take the same approach with your pooch at home.

Brushing your dog's teeth is the single most effective way to maintain oral health, so try to make this a regular occur-



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rence at home. Use pet-specific and veterinary-approved toothpaste for the best results. You also can find toothbrushes specifically designed for dogs that will do wonders for your pet's overall tooth health

and appearance.

CHEW TREATS

There are many treats on the market that can help improve your dog's oral health, especially if they have

important anti-tartar ingredients. Along with helping puppies learn to chew and swallow safely, these products made from rawhide and other safe substances can help keep teeth and gums clean.

Check with your veterinarian for a list of items approved for your specific breed. Don't forget to always monitor your dog when it is chewing on a new treat to prevent any choking hazards.

Preventing Kennel Cough

If you've heard it before, you know the unmistakable sound of kennel cough. Described as a honking noise that can sometimes be accompanied by gagging, this is symptom of an infection that can be painful for dogs.

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, kennel cough is a term loosely used to describe a group of respiratory infections. These can be both viral and bacterial, and they generally cause inflammation of a dog's voice box and windpipe.

Much like a chest cold in humans, it is a highly contagious infection that can spread quickly. Dogs that are in the company of other dogs frequently are at greatest risk, hence the term kennel cough. This is particularly true for dogs in enclosed or poorly ventilated areas.

PREVENTION & CAUSES

Fortunately, preventing kennel cough is a relatively straightforward process. Making sure that your dog isn't exposed to the aforementioned conditions during any kennel stays is always best for both owner and dog.

Vaccinations also are important for several of the agents known to be associated with kennel cough. Your veterinarian may suggest having your dog vaccinated to prevent them, especially if it will be around dogs in kennel environments.

SYMPTOMS

What exactly are you look-



ing for when it comes to identifying kennel cough? In most cases, dogs will appear healthy except for a persistent dry cough with that honking sound, according to the ASPCA, which also lists gagging, coughing up white phlegm, fever or nasal dis-

charge as other symptoms.

Your dog can catch kennel cough through direct or indirect contact. This can include germs on a food or water bowl.

TREATMENT

There are many treatment

options when it comes to taking care of kennel cough. In many cases, your veterinarian may advise you to let the infection run its course as long as your dog is eating and drinking enough, while also remaining in a well-ventilated, safe environment.

An antibiotic that targets the Bordetella bacteria can be given to support the recovery process and kill the infection. Talk with your veterinarian about your options to make sure you're treating the issue in the most effective way possible.

Preventing Dog Bites

Dogs have traditionally been known as man's best friend, yet any dog of any age, size or breed has the potential to bite. Fortunately, with some common sense and preventive measures, we can keep the risk of being bitten at a low level.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 4.5 million dog bites occur each year in the United States. This is a big number that can be lessened through education, especially for those populations most susceptible to bites.

TIPS FOR BITE PREVENTION

Dogs who feel threatened or unsafe may react by biting. Here are a few warning signs to look out for, from The Humane Society of The United States:

- Tensed body
- Stiff tail
- Pulled back head and ears
- Furrowed brow
- Eyes rolled so the whites are visible
- Flicking tongue
- Intense stare
- Backing away

If you observe any of these signs, never turn your back and run. A dog's natural instinct will be to chase, so calmly try to de-escalate the situation and slowly leave the environment.

RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP

One of the best ways to prevent dog bites is through responsible pet ownership. The more you can train your dog to be around people, the less likely it will feel threatened or overwhelmed by human interaction.



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This starts with your first day of pet ownership, as it is critical that you adopt or purchase your dog from a credible source. Well-managed animal shelters are great places to find friendly pets because these professionals have information

about the dog's background, personality and behavioral characteristics.

AT-RISK POPULATIONS

According to the CDC, children from ages 5 to 9 are at highest risk for dog bites. They

may not be able to read a dog's body language or understand potentially dangerous situations. That's why it is critical to never leave young children along with dogs. Once your child is old enough to grasp those important concepts,

teach them about safe dog ownership. This includes never playing with a dog that is sleeping or chewing on a bone, and teaching them that petting unfamiliar dogs can have potentially harmful consequences.



Shed Pounds With Your Pooch

Owning a dog comes with more than just emotional benefits. Your physical well-being also can be drastically improved. Dogs need exercise, which means you naturally can work off the pounds while you walk, jog or swim together.

There are many ways to make this happen, so be creative when thinking of exercise activities for you and your pooch.

MUTUAL BENEFITS

Before deciding to bring home a new pup, take the time to understand how much exercise it will need to remain in optimal health. Some breeds require more than others, and knowing this

can help you decide which type of dog fits your lifestyle.

Research shows that our daily activities can have a major impact on our dogs. If we spend most of the day sedentary and inside, our dogs generally go without critical exercise that can be great for their joints and overall weight.

Looking to jump start a new commitment to weight loss and healthy living? Finding a

dog that requires a lot of exercise may be the catalyst you're seeking. These include the Australian shepherd, border collie, Boston terrier, boxer and dalmatian, among many others.

If going through your local shelter, be sure to check on any health conditions specific to the breed of your chosen dog. This will help you exercise your dog in the safest way possible.

WHY AND HOW TO EXERCISE

Taking a dog for a walk, hike, swim or run are a few ways you can hit the workout circuit together. Rollerblading or bike riding together can be a bit more challenging but just as fun for active owners and dogs.

To make sure you stay on top of your dog's exercise requirements, set a daily exercise routine and be sure to follow it at the same time every day. This

will help you consistently meet your goals, whether they be for steps, mileage or overall calories burned.

According to the Harvard Health Publication, one year-long study found that walking an overweight dog helped both the animals and their owners lose weight. Researchers found that the dogs provided support to their owners — yet another reason dogs have earned the reputation as our best friends.

Choosing a Shelter Dog

A shelter is a great place to find a dog that needs a loving home. These facilities usually have dogs in a variety of ages, sizes, colors and breeds — and many of them are there because of issues related to their owners rather than their own behavior or temperament.

In the long run, dogs adopted from shelters typically cost less than those purchased or even acquired for free because shelters generally take care of vaccinations, spaying or neutering and even microchipping.

Talk with your local shelter professionals to get a clear understanding of costs and requirements for your specific breed. They will have all the information you need to take your new dog home with confidence.

DOG CHARACTERISTICS

Choosing the right dog can be tricky in a shelter environment. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to make the process smoother. Many shelters have websites with information on some of the available dogs. This can help you compare choices before even stepping into a shelter, although face-to-face interaction will likely be the defining factor in your choice.

Shelters generally conduct thorough behavioral analysis of each dog and can give you important information on why the dog is there, possible health issues and personality traits they have observed.

The key to leaving the shelter with the right dog for your family is finding one that fits your personality and lifestyle. Some breeds need more exer-



cising, brushing and meals than others.

Be sure to weigh all possible factors in terms of your free time and financial situation to make sure you can adequately care for the dog.

INVOLVING THE KIDS

If you have children at home, choosing a shelter dog can be

one of the first important decisions they help you make. The process of assessing the dog's suitability for your family and then making an educated decision requires maturity and common sense — two important qualities you are trying to instill in your children.

Sit down with them while you perform research on

breeds. Discuss pros and cons of various breeds and give them the freedom to voice their opinion.

While the decision will likely come down to your gut instinct and preference, allowing your children to be involved in the process can help them with critical-thinking and decision-making skills.

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