

## **THINKING ABOUT GETTING A DOG?**

### **Step 1      Ask yourself the following questions**

Why do I want a dog? Status symbol? Friends have one? Substitute baby? Companionship? To show? To breed? Assistance dog? Guard dog? What function will the dog fulfil?  
Are my family all agreed about wanting a dog?  
Will my friends and family be happy for him to visit them?  
Does anyone in the family have allergic reactions to dog hair?

Will I be able to provide the company he needs? Dogs should not be left alone for more than 4 hours.

Can I take my dog on holiday with me or provide suitable care for him if not?

Who will look after him while I am at work, or can I take him with me?

Can I afford a dog sitter/walker?

Do I have a time-consuming hobby, or can he join in?

Can I include him in all aspects of my family life?

Is my car/vehicle suitable for him to travel in?

Do I have enough space in my house and garden?

Am I prepared for the impact he will have on my home – furniture etc – and the extra work involved in cleaning up after him?

Can I provide him with the daily nourishment he needs?

Am I prepared to exercise him regularly, even when the weather is bad?

Can I provide him with some doggy friends with whom he can regularly play?

What kind of coat am I looking for? Do I have time for grooming? Can I put up with lots of shedding? Can I afford regular clipping and/or grooming?

What kind of health issues might the breed I want be prone to?

Am I able to afford the veterinary care required, such as annual vaccinations, plus any other treatment he may require? The PDSA estimates that the life-time cost of a toy dog is around £16,000, a small dog £21,000, a medium dog 23,000, a large dog £27,000 and a giant dog £31,000.

### **Step 2      Do the Research**

Check out the Kennel Club website ([www.thekennelclub.org](http://www.thekennelclub.org)) or [www.dogproblemsolved.com](http://www.dogproblemsolved.com) or Google the breed you are interested in to find out about breed characteristics. There will be pros and cons for every breed – depends what you are looking for. If you are looking for a cross-breed (cavachon, cockerpool, labradoodle, jug etc), check out the breed characteristics for each breed in the parentage.

Go to Dog shows, watch TV programmes and ask people with the dog you are interested in all about them. Most dog owners are very happy to tell you about their dog.

### **Step 3      Find a reputable breeder.**

Do not buy your dog on e-bay, Gumtree, from an advert in the paper or from someone you met in the pub or in a car park. Do not buy from puppy farms. The Kennel Club has a register of breeders who have to meet and maintain high standards of health, bloodlines and care.

## **Books about Dogs**

These are a few of the excellent books now available which can help you understand your dog and what is involved before you get her. Most are in paperback and most in the library system. Some will have websites with lots of information and video clips.

*In Defence of Dogs* John Bradshaw

*The Genius of Dogs* Brian Hare and Vanessa Woods

*Inside of a Dog* Alexandra Horowitz

*Before and After Getting Your Puppy* Ian Dunbar

*Don't Shoot the Dog* Karen Pryor

*Reaching the Animal Mind* Karen Pryor

*For the Love of a Dog* Patricia B McConnell

*Tail Talk – Understanding the Secret Language of Dogs* Sophie Collins