

How I Got My Parents to Buy Me a Puppy

Parents must set limits, but amazing things happen when a child wants a puppy.

Ted Curtis

Parents love to grant their children's wishes. They also must set limits, which is why kids don't always get what they want. But amazing things happen when a child wants a puppy. Some kids beam with melt-your-heart smiles. Others prove they're responsible by earning straight A's in school or completing chores promptly without complaint. The shrewd ones transform family dinners into bargaining sessions, employing complex negotiation strategies.

Cameron, 6

Dog: Lily, 7-month-old Coton de Tulear

Cameron's mom didn't think her family was ready for another pet. It had been only a few years since their Chinese Shar-Pei died suddenly. But a stray cat and her son Cameron's smile changed her mind. The cat had been living under their house and had kittens. When Cameron named each kitten after a flower, his mom knew the time was right for another pet. "I wanted a dog," Cameron said, unaware his actions with the kittens spoke louder than his words. "Now [Lily] gets up early and follows me around the house. I love Lily."

Spencer, 8

Dog: Scout, 16-month-old Cairn Terrier

"I played a lot with a dog in the neighborhood," Spencer said. "I really liked it and had a lot of fun, and I wanted a dog, too." A year later, Scout and Spencer are inseparable. Selling his parents on the idea of bringing home a dog was a cinch for the boy now known as the Scoutmaster. "After all," Spencer's father Steve said, "Spencer's first word was 'dog' — even before he said 'Mom' or 'Dad' he said 'dog.' How could we say no?"

Jason, Eric and Nicolas, 12, 8 and 6

Dog: Toby, 11-month-old Golden Retriever

The boys became hooked on dogs while playing with a neighbor's. But persuading their parents to add one to their family was not easy. "We said we would take turns taking care of the dog," Jason said, "We would take him out, wash him, brush him and feed him." After a year of negotiation, their cause seemed lost. What was the clincher? Picking up waste, Jason said, chuckling. "When we said we would do that so my parents wouldn't have to, they finally said OK."