

Best Pup Ever

Take the time to find out about the needs of a breed or mix of breeds before you bring a puppy home.

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Its the best puppy ever! That's what you want to say when you bring a new puppy into your home, and as your puppy grows, you want to continue to be able to say, Its the best dog ever. If you do some work before you choose your puppy, you should be able to say just that for the lifetime of your dog.

Don't make an impulse purchase and regret it. Take the time, not only to study the different breeds, but also to analyze your lifestyle and your schedule. That best puppy can turn into an annoying burden if you don't consider what kind of dog will best work for your family. **Activity Level**The activity level of a dog is an important consideration. For a jogger, a Dalmatian or one of the larger sporting breeds might be just the ticket. If walking is more your speed, think shorter legs on the dog you choose. **Personality**If your backyard is where all the neighbors gather, think not only about how much exercise your dog will need, but also about its temperament. Breeds that were developed as guardians may be aloof or suspicious of strangers, and may try to protect the family, even when no protection is needed. Even small dogs can fall into this category. The Shih Tzu and Lhasa Apso are about the same size, but Shih Tzu were bred as companion dogs. Generally, they love everyone. The Lhasa Apso was bred as a watchdog. A Lhasa can be a loving companion, but it might not be as friendly and outgoing with strangers as some other breeds.

Think about temperament in mixed-breed puppies, too. If you know what the mix is, you'll have a better idea of whether or not the dog will fit into your lifestyle. Even if the only clue is terrier mix, keep in mind that terriers are generally very active. Bigger dogs of any kind will need more exercise. **Grooming Needs**Once you've considered activity level and temperament, think about grooming. You may think you want a breed that doesn't shed much, but even short-coated breeds shed. Pugs are notorious for the amount of hair they shed, and those tiny white hairs from a Dalmatian will soon work their way into your upholstered furniture.

If you're thinking of a breed that needs professional grooming, make sure you consider the cost of grooming, and understand that you will still need to do some grooming yourself.

Groomer Babs Land of Langston, Alabama, says that some breeds, such as Poodles, Shih Tzu and Bichons Frises, need regular professional grooming every six to eight weeks, as well as daily brushing at home. For the professional grooming, depending on where you live, you can expect to pay from \$35 to \$75 per grooming session.