

# The joys — and job — of owning a pet

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It's easy to say "yes" to a cute animal on adoption day at your local pet supply store. Or to buy that "doggie in the window" in a pet shop.

If you're thinking about getting a new pet, try this quiz to explore how ready you are to take on an animal companion:

## 1. How do you feel about getting a pet?

- My kids are begging for one and I can't say no
- As long as the family helps care for it, I'll be fine
- I really want a pet

## 2. Where you currently live:

- It's pet-friendly
- Pets aren't allowed but we'll sneak ours in

## 3. I've looked into the cost of vet bills, food and other pet needs and:

- My income will cover the costs
- I'll dig into savings if I have to
- I had no idea it could be so expensive

## 4. My family has pet allergies:

- True
- False

## 5. I'm ready to make a commitment to a pet for:

- As long as the pet lives
- As long as having a pet works with our schedule

## 6. I work long hours so my pet will be fed and walked:

- By a paid pet walker or sitter
- By a neighbor, friend or family member
- By the kids if they remember – or it will need to wait until I get home from work

## 7. I'm getting a pet that needs training so:

- I'll take it to classes at an adult or animal training school
- No time for training so I'll just hope for the best

## 8. If we go on vacation or out of town, we'll take our pet:

- With us
- To a kennel or to family or friends
- Never thought about that

## There are no right or wrong answers

The quiz is meant to prompt some thoughts — and maybe a family meeting — before you get a pet. Some discussion points include:

- Even if your kids want the pet, you may wind up being the caregiver. Will you be annoyed? Are you too busy with other obligations?
- If your family has allergies, choose a pet that doesn't create a health issue in your house.
- If pets aren't allowed where you live, are you willing to pay fines, give up the pet or move if your "secret" is discovered?
- Pets can be costly. Call a local vet to find out how much checkups, shots and sick visits are. Consider food, toys, boarding and other expenses. Be careful not to take on more than you can handle.
- Owning a pet is a commitment. Pets – like people – can get sick and need more help from you. Can you commit to care for your pet through thick and thin?

## Your pet deserves responsible care

It's a big decision to bring a pet into your life. To prevent disappointment, return or abandonment of your pet, think ahead. Be sure to think about living in your home from a pet's perspective, too. It can't hurt to let "Is your home a good match for this pet" be as high on your list as "Is this pet a good match for my family and home?"