

5 Ways to Find the Best Family Dogs



1. Consider the purpose of the breed

Consider what a dog's breed or mix of breeds was meant to do. For example, a Jack Russell/Aussie cross is not going to be the "lay at your feet by the fireplace" kind of dog. Jack Russells were bred to hunt rodents and Aussies were bred to herd sheep. Both of these breeds are high energy and need a lot of exercise. Most dogs were originally bred for a purpose, and that purpose will have a lot to do with their instincts, drives, energy levels, and the amount of exercise and management they will need on a day to day basis.

2. Look beyond the designer hybrids

There has been a surge in popularity and availability of certain breed mixes in the past 10 years. But in many cases, the best mixed breeds are already available at your local shelter. Animal shelters are filled with good dogs of every shape and size that need loving families. Instead of spending thousands of dollars on a designer hybrid, give a shelter dog a chance to become your best friend.

3. Don't take home the first dog you see

Take time to meet lots of dogs. Visit shelters, reputable breeders, foster homes, etc. Try not to be spontaneous and don't just adopt a dog because you feel sorry for it. This will be a 12-15 year commitment and spending time and energy to find the best dog for you can't be overstated. A great way to "test drive" a potential match and get information about personalities and temperaments is to become a volunteer for your local shelter as a dog walker. You can have the opportunity to meet many different dogs and learn more about them as individuals.

4. Good looks are not everything

Keep in mind that the best puppy or dog to fit your family's lifestyle might not be the adorable fuzz ball you first meet or see on the internet. A puppy's looks and size will change as they mature. Just because a puppy is the "cutest" or "prettiest" of the bunch, does not always translate into the best dog for your family. Remember that disposition and temperament are not dependant on good looks and pictures and descriptions on the internet are not always accurate. Meet your proposed puppy or dog in person and spend time with them before you make a life long commitment.

5. Get professional advice

One of the best ways to find your match is getting professional advice from a dog trainer. She/he can help you access individual dogs and how they would fit with your lifestyle and family. Some trainers volunteer at local shelters and do temperament evaluations to help place adoptable in the best homes. These tests are a valuable tool in the matchmaking process and can determine if dogs have underlying behavioral issues. Look to www.apdt.com or www.petprofessionalguild.com in the US to find a trainer near you, or www.cappdt.ca in Canada.

