

Is Your Child Ready for a Pet?

By Judith J. Castillo, Neighborhood News Staff Writer

Kids want pets. If you don't believe me, watch online videos of kids' reactions to getting a first pet—cuteness overload! But when the reality of a new pet sinks in, you don't want to be in the doghouse about your decision. Ask a few questions up front and make this a paw-sitive experience for the whole family.

Should we get a pet?

Pets. Kids see them in shows, read about them in books, and have friends who own one. They're bombarded with pet culture. But is it the right time for your family to get one? Ask yourself these questions to find out: Does your schedule allow for interaction with a pet? Can you financially support the animal and all of its needs? Does your child show responsibility for pet caring?

Time

Data from animal shelters indicates high numbers of surrenders after impulse buying a pet. People lead busy lives. A new pet requires potty breaks and exercise. If you are not able to provide time for the pet because of a hectic schedule, it's best to put off ownership for a less busy time.

Money

Financial commitment for the life of the pet is a must. Unexpected veterinary visits, specialized, more expensive diets, and costs associated with boarding an animal can add up to big money. It's hard to foretell what costs may arise, but pet ownership includes being prepared to meet the animal's needs no matter the cost.

Care Roles and Responsibilities

It was your child who asked for the pet, but ultimately it's a family effort that will care for Fido. Depending on the age of your child, you can assign pet care responsibilities, but there are things a child simply cannot do. Walking the pet for example, may need to be an adult responsibility either because of the size of the animal, or the conditions of the street on which you walk your pet. If the pet is one that lives in a cage, supervise your child feeding the pet, as the animal may make a quick escape with the open cage.

Resources for further reading:

- Six Questions to Ask about Children and Pet Ownership - <https://healthblog.uofmhealth.org/childrens-health/your-child-ready-for-a-pet-6-questions-to-ask#:~:text=A%20toddler%20may%20be%20able,also%20be%20considered%2C%20King%20says>
- Is My Child Ready for a Pet? - <http://www.wellmindedpets.com/blog/2015/3/15/is-my-child-ready-for-a-pet>
- Animal Shelters and Surrendered Pet Statistics - <https://www.aspca.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics>



