



HOW TO PICK THE PERFECT DOG OR PUPPY

I used to give the conventional wisdom: Pick a good breeder via AKC breeder referral, read about the breeds on the web, check health of parents, etc. Do your homework to pick the "right dog" for you and your family.

BUT that's not how I pick a dog, and it's not how my many "dog-professional" friends (trainers, groomers, and shelter workers) have picked their "heart" dogs. If you want a "heart" dog, follow your heart:

#1 - Know that you are ready for a dog, and open your heart

#2 - DO NOT HURRY, take your time, and don't worry that you are taking "too much" time, because when you find the "right" dog or puppy, you will know.

#3 - You probably won't know immediately, although **you may**. Instead you will find yourself, as you continue looking for your dog, thinking back to that shelter dog, or puppy, or litter, that you saw, and wondering: "Is he/she still available? Is he okay? Did he find a good home?" And when you realize that it is nagging at the back of your mind, you will pick up the phone to find the answer to your question and you will hear something like: "It's funny you called, because we HAD sold/placed him, but he was returned back and is still looking for a home" or "No, no one seems interested in him" or "We're so glad you called because we were really hoping you would take him".

And, in some way, he will probably be all wrong for your situation. He will be too big, or too hairy, or have too much energy, or he will be a male and you were looking for a female. But he will be brought into your life to challenge you, or comfort you, or teach you something that you will treasure as long as you live, and you will be eternally grateful that you found each other.

If you go the other route, and try to find the "perfect" breed for your family, or the exact dog for your chosen dog sport, or lifestyle, after you have taken your dog home, you will spend a lot of time being disappointed. Because "expectations are pre-meditated resentments". Then you will call the friend who is the "dog professional" who directed you to that breed or dog, and you will blame them, or they will feel like you are blaming them, and no one will feel good about it. Especially the dog, which could have been someone else's "heart dog".

There ARE 2 bits of advice that I used to give, that I still give:

1 - If you go to a breeder to buy a puppy, DON'T ask about the temperament of the litter, or parents. If you ask, they will always say it is good and you will really not have gotten any information, but if it REALLY is something they are proud of, and something they considered when they did the breeding, you won't have to ask, they will TELL you, because it is something they are proud of. They will want to tell you how wonderful the parents are, or how they temperament tested the litter, etc. *You shouldn't have to ask, and if you do have to ask, that alone tells you something.*

2 - Don't buy from a breeder who only shows in conformation dog shows. They should be doing SOMETHING additional with their dogs, and it doesn't matter if it is AKC competition (obedience, agility, rally, hunting) or fun, (frisbee, freestyle, dock diving) or just that they take their dogs to the local nursing home to do therapy work, or they take their dogs to Camp. Because in my experience, the people who don't do anything with their dogs except show in conformation, are the least knowledgeable about behavior & training, and have the least integrity. Don't let those conformation ribbons impress you. If that's ALL they want to show you, run in the opposite direction.

VERY IMPORTANT: Ignore these last 2 rules if #3 above applies. : -)

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