

# CHOOSING A GOOD BREEDER AND PUPPY

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## Questions for the Breeder:

1. ***How long have you been a breeder?*** (You want someone experienced, not just an ordinary person who wants their dog bred for the fun of it)
2. ***How often do you breed?*** (How many times per year)
3. ***What age did you start breeding the female?*** (Under 2 years – not good)
4. ***What food do you feed the dogs and puppies?*** (Some large breed dog breeders will feed the puppies adult food. There are special “large breed formulas” for puppies available now. If they feed ...Dog/Puppy Chow – that’s bad. If they feed...Iaams, Eukanuba, Pro Plan – that’s good.)
5. ***Do you feed the puppies all together or separate? If all together, do you assure all are eating enough?***
6. ***What age do you let your puppies go to homes?*** (6 to 8 weeks is good – Earlier or later is bad)
7. ***Can I see the mother and father?*** (If they aren’t on the premises, ask for information on locating and visiting them. Their word and/or pictures aren’t good enough. The puppy could be a mix, poorly bred, or have health problems. Even if they say they have papers and the litter is registered with the AKC, many dogs can be registered using “fake” papers. The puppy’s parents should be friendly, attentive, not aggressive to you, the puppies or eachother. For some breeds, calm and quiet is still o.k., but they should not show any signs of skittishness, fear or pushiness.)
8. ***Have the puppies been wormed?*** (They should be wormed at a very young age. It’s common for the mother to pass worms to the puppies and they are also very susceptible to them when young.)
9. ***Have the puppies had any “puppy shots?”*** (They should have had at least one set)
10. ***Has the litter been registered with the AKC?*** (If not, ask when it will be done. If so, find out when they will send you the puppy’s papers. It’s one blue sheet to fill out and mail into the AKC. After you buy a puppy, be persistent with the breeder to send you the puppy’s papers. If you don’t get it within a year or two, you may be unable to register the dog at all.)
11. ***May I see the puppies?*** (The puppies should be “squeaky,” alert, playful and not fearful. Mellow and quiet is o.k., just not too sedate. They may play aggressively with eachother which is o.k. in some breeds. They should have clean, clear eyes (no puss or secretion), clean dry ears, and cold clean noses (no secretions like puss but they should be damp).

They should have a plump, “puppy” belly but if it’s too large and round with skinny legs and face then it probably has worms. While holding the puppy, gently pull the skin from its shoulders, then let it go. The skin should go right back into place. If it stays “wrinkley” for a while then it could be dehydrated and/or malnourished. It should not be too “sleepy.”)

12. ***May I see where the puppies are kept?*** (It should be clean and dry. There may be a lingering urine or feces stench which is normal for keeping so many pups in one place, but it shouldn’t be dirty or so bad you can’t breathe. If you are not sure, look at the puppy’s paws. They should be clean, dry and with semi-tough pads. There shouldn’t be poop or pee or dirt caked on them or between the pads.

## Choosing a Puppy

There are a few tests you can do to assure you find a good personality for what you want. And that’s the key sentence – **for what you want.**

First, sit down and decide EXACTLY what you are looking for in a dog. If you want one only “for the kids,” then you’re better off getting a fish or hamster or something. A dog is a life that solely depends upon you. They think very differently from humans and ALL breeds, big or small, have a strict pack order. They don’t have T.V., work, books, friends or other things to keep them busy. **YOU ARE THEIR WHOLE LIFE.** You are the only thing they live for. Do you want it to be obedient? Do you lead an active life that you can include the dog in? Like including it when jogging, roller blading, bike riding, going to children’s outdoor games, to work or other places that you can bring it with? Many breeds are active and need the above exercises like jogging and roller blading on a daily basis.

Will you have time to train your dog and have taught your children to treat the dog gently and respectfully? Make certain you have studied ALL the breeds and talked to breeders of the breeds you are interested in before deciding on which one to buy. A good way to see breeds first hand is by going to a dog/pet show. There are almost always breeders there with many members from their kennels. You can see the breeds in real life and ask the breeders questions at the same time.

Buying a Rottweiler or Chow cause it’s “cute” then neglecting it is only going to cause the dog to have an early demise due to human ignorance. For instance, a Rottweiler is VERY dominant and stubborn by nature, yet they are one of the best breeds to have around children. Yet, if allowed, it WILL take over the pack, and because of it’s strength and powerful body it will become uncontrollable.

## Tests For Temperament:

1. Lightly toss your keys or something noisy on the ground in the middle of the puppies. They should either go up to it and play with it, turn and look, or just ignore it. Any of those responses are good. If any of them jump and run away scared or act overly skittish – then don't choose those pups. Some breeds tend to overreact but fearfulness is not desired. A fearful puppy will grow up to be a fearful adult that may become a “fear biter” and it also won't protect you.
2. Pick up the puppy in your arms and hold it on its back like you would hold a baby. If you want a mellow submissive one it should just lay there happily. If you want a strong-willed confident one who will be an exceptional protector (with obedience training), it will struggle to try and turn upright and get away. Both are not bad temperaments – this is just your personality preference. Now, just because you pick a submissive one doesn't mean it won't be a good protector. And keep in mind the strong-willed ones need much more work and control to raise. Anything in between these two is the best. Remember no fearful or skittish puppies. These are the ones who may look “cute” by hiding in your lap or under your legs looking for a place to hide and/or expecting you to protect them. This temperament is not desired in any breed.
3. Male or Female? Again, this is your personal preference. In my experience with dogs, the males are more happy go lucky, they just want to play and mate all the time temperaments. The females are more down to earth, in tune with your emotions, don't bother me types. They have all the responsibility, they have to have and raise the pups, protect them and do all the work temperaments. Both are good depending on what you want.

I feel it just takes males a little longer to “mature” and become that in tune with you than females. Both should be neutered/spayed before one year of age to avoid the hormones causing such things as dominance, aggression, and health problems such as cancer.

As you can see, the decision to bring a puppy or dog into your life is a major one, not to be taken lightly. With the above information you should be able to successfully choose a puppy to fit your wants and needs. Skipping steps or choosing one because it's “cute” or “free from a friend” are only going to cause you and the dog misery later on. That's just like buying a pair of shoes that are two sizes too small and in the wrong style just because they were on sale. Only this is a living being with feelings and needs that depend on us to provide for them.