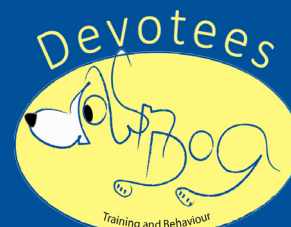


Down Dog Digest



In this packed issue

Main feature: What you need to know before you get your puppy

Education feature: What should you prepare before your puppy arrives home?

Carol's Challenge: Do you really know your dog?

Do you want a puppy?

What you need to know before you buy

Why do you want a dog? The answer to this question is really important. Be honest with yourself. Just want cuddles? Get a cat, rabbit or guinea pig. Like the idea and kudos? Talk to dog owning friends and family about the downsides as well as the good things. Want to go for long rambling walks to get fit? Help out at your local rescue centre first, or borrow a friend's dog.

Can you afford a dog? The initial outlay if you want a pure bred puppy can be an eye-watering four figures, but even this pales into insignificance when you consider the on-going costs - vet bills, insurance, food, equipment, training classes, dog walker or daycare, kennels...

Bad reasons to get a dog include getting one for the children. Children will often pester parents to get a dog; they will promise to help care for it and walk it - but the reality is usually very different. Be realistic - it will be YOU that has to do the day-to-day work with your dog and YOU will still have the dog when your children grow up, go to college and leave home.

Have you got the energy and the time for a dog? Can you fit the housetraining, grooming, twice-daily walks and training into your current lifestyle? Owning a dog is a 10-18 year commitment - what will your life look like in 10 years time?

If you are truly committed to getting a dog, read on - there's a lot more to think about than which breed you think looks nice.

Your first decision is: should I get a puppy, or an older dog from a rescue centre?

With a puppy, you have a clean slate. You can plan exactly what you want, but there's always an element of guesswork about its adult character and unknown possible future issues. And you have to do all the early training.

With an older dog, you can see the adult character - what you see is what you get in the main. They are usually housetrained and biting and chewing are unlikely to be major problems. But they may already have some behaviours you might not like which need addressing

Whether to get a female or a male is very much a matter of personal choice. It is said (but without much evidence) that females are easier to train, but in my experience that is not always true.

Which breed or breed mix to get is more important. Do your research. Investigate online sources. Ask friends or family with that breed. Talk to breed societies, visit dog shows to talk to people who own your breed shortlist.



What you need to know before you buy

Once you've decided what breed you want, you must find a good breeder. Kennel Club Assured Breeders follow best practice in breeding and raising healthy, great puppies. Even better if that breeder follows The Puppy Plan or something very similar, which prepares puppies to become great family pets. (See www.thepuppyplan.com).

You can also ask people who have that breed who they would recommend. There are some great breeders out there who are not registered, but who raise well socialised, happy puppies who make great pets.

Avoid like the plague breeders who want to bring the puppies to you, or meet you somewhere else, or puppies sold through a retail outlet. These are usually puppy farmed puppies. Do not support this vile trade, no matter how sorry you feel for the poor puppies. Puppies for the pet market should be raised in a home environment.



Try to visit the puppies at least twice at the breeders home. Ask to see both the mother (essential) and sire (if possible). Here are the important things to check:

Are the parents friendly, happy dogs?

Is the mum happy for you to interact with her puppies?

Are the puppies in an obviously well used pen or area in a busy part of the home?

Are there plenty of toys and objects for them to interact with?

Are the puppies full of energy, plump, with shiny coats and bright eyes?

Can the breeder pick them up and handle them thoroughly?

Walk away if the mother is removed or taken away while you see the puppies; if the mother barks at you (especially with an explosion of barking); if the pups shy away from the breeder or if the breeder struggles to pick them up and cuddle them; if the environment is bare; or if the pups are kept outside the house, no matter how secure, or even luxurious, the kennel is. And walk away if you have any reservations at all.

Sometimes the most difficult part is choosing which puppy to have. A good breeder will quiz you about your home and lifestyle and whether you have had dogs, especially this breed, before, then they will suggest the best puppy for you.

In general, choose from the middle ranks of puppies, not the bossy, pushy one or the most timid. Take someone experienced with you to help you decide if you can. Try to use your head to decide - but your heart will play a part too!

If you live close to us we will come with you for free to help you choose.

Once you've chosen your puppy, leave a jumper, blanket or towel that has been next to your skin for some time, or worn for a day, with the breeder. This will get the puppy used to your scent and will help to reassure the puppy when you take it home.

Of course, there is a lot more to get ready before you bring the puppy home - read on to the next section of this newsletter to find out more.

Taking your time in deciding on the dog you want, finding an excellent breeder and choosing the right puppy will go a long way towards you having the dream dog you always wanted.

We'll talk about finding and choosing rescue dogs and their special needs in a future Down Dog Digest.

Preparing for your new puppy

What you need to have ready

Before you bring your puppy home there are several things you need to get ready. It's almost as bad as the stuff you need for a new baby!

You'll need:

- a bed. One with nice padded sides is good, large enough to allow some growth room but not too big - the puppy needs to feel safe and secure
- feeding bowls for water and food
- 2-3 toys. Get ones that will be most appropriate for your breed - take Carol's challenge overleaf to find out more!
- baby gates or a doggy play pen. You'll need to restrict your puppy's access to the whole house while housetraining
- a suitable size collar and normal (not extending) lead. You'll need to buy several different collars as your pup grows so don't splash out here
- food. Your breeder should give you some of the food the puppy is used to. Continue that or change (over 5 days to avoid tummy upsets) to the food of your choice
- a copy of my book, the puppy bible, Pesky Puppy to Perfect Pet, available from our website (www.downdog.co.uk) or from Amazon
- You may also want to use a crate. Try to borrow one, or if buying one, get one that will be big enough for your puppy once it's fully grown. You can always temporarily reduce the size by using cardboard boxes to block off part



It's also worth finding and registering with a good local vet practice and booking your first check and vaccination appointment before your puppy actually comes home.

Check your garden fencing and make sure it is secure, especially at ground level. Puppies can squeeze through very small gaps.

Look at the plants and shrubs, make sure you know what they are and check if they are poisonous to dogs - if so, fence them off (or dig them up) so your puppy won't be able to get to them. Puppies will try to eat anything and everything if they get the chance.

If you can't properly fence the whole garden, think about creating a small secure area so your puppy has somewhere safe to run around and explore.

Prepare other members of the family for the pending arrival, especially children. It's natural for them to want to play with the puppy and cuddle it as soon as you are through the door, but it's vital you give your puppy plenty of time to settle, get used to and explore her new environment without overwhelming her.

Take a small travel crate or cardboard box when you collect your puppy. Line it with newspaper or kitchen towel - and have plenty spare too, in case of accidents during the journey. We got through nearly a whole roll of kitchen towel when Gus was sick on his journey home.

Once home, place the bed in a warm, draught free place and line it with the blanket, jumper or towel you'd left with the breeder. It's your choice where in the house you want to puppy to sleep, but your bedroom or nearby is good for the first couple of weeks. You can always move it later on.

A ticking clock or a warm hot water bottle wrapped in a towel can help your puppy to settle in her new home.

Give her some gentle fuss and petting, but no rough play - and limit children's access until your puppy has settled in. Puppies need time to get used to the huge upheaval of moving to a new place and leaving their littermates.

We'll have more on helping your new pup settle in and what to do in the first week or so in a future issue.

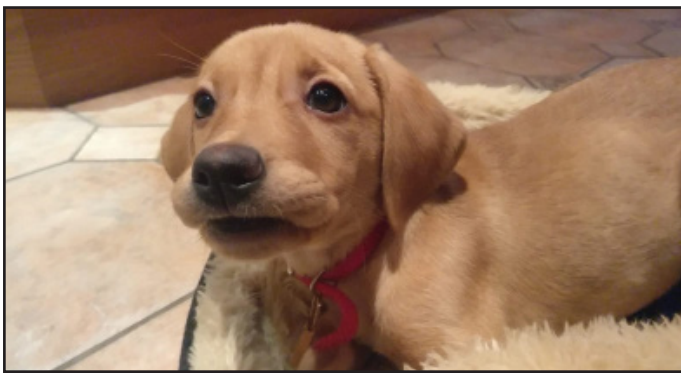
Carol's Challenge

Each month I'm going to set you a challenge.

This month your challenge is to research your dog's breed or breeds (or your possible new puppy's breed).

What breed(s) is your dog? If you're not sure, have a look at some possible breed pictures online or ask a knowledgeable friend. Or guess!

Here's a picture of a puppy - can you guess the two breeds here? Answer below.



Once you've decided what breed or breeds make up your dog, do some research. Find out what your dog was originally bred for.

From the tiniest chihuahua to the largest great Dane, modern dogs are far more variable in size, shape and behaviour than any other living mammal.

Every single one of the 340 worldwide breeds known today, including the popular doodles and other "designer" breeds, was

created by humans.

The UK Kennel Club currently recognises 218 different breeds divided into: terriers; gundogs; hounds; herding dogs; working dogs; companion dogs and utility dogs.

Which group does your puppy belong to?

Then answer the questions below for your dog's breed (or breeds).

Where did your breed originate?

What job was your dog bred to do? What other job(s) does your breed now do?

What did/does that job involve? (Working alone? Working with humans, other dogs or other animals? Guarding? Herding?)

What special capabilities does your breed have? (Have they got a brilliant nose? Or great eyesight? Or stupendous hearing?)

Once you have found the answers to these questions, think about what that means for your dog's everyday life.

Are they getting the chance to do what they were bred to do? Do they get the opportunity to use their special capabilities?

If the answer is no, could you change something to allow your dog to do the sort of job he was bred for?

Put your answers into our Down Dog Devotees discussion forum for me to review. Send any questions too!

(The gorgeous Cali is a cross between a Golden Retriever and Vizla. Did you get it right?)

We hope you enjoyed this Down Dog Digest.

Please feel free to share it with any friends, neighbours or family members you think might find it interesting.

To get more information, tips, and advice about owning, training, caring for and enjoying your dog more, become a Down Dog Devotee. You'll get these regular newsletters sent to your home. You'll also get access to our huge range of training tips, videos, information sheets, webinars and podcasts as well as access to our Discussion Forum where you can ask any doggy related questions you need answers to. You get big discounts off all of our online and in-person classes too.

Go to the website, www.downdog.co.uk, to find out more.