

The Capital Kennel Club of Juneau offers this information to help you make a good decisions in getting the right dog for you. By a “quality” puppy or dog we do not mean one who will necessarily be a showing winner == or even a purebred -- we mean one that is of sound structure, health and temperament who will give you the same years of enjoyment that we have had with our dogs.

Things to consider before getting a dog:

- A dog is a responsibility 365 days a year. This includes vacations, holidays, and sick days.
- A dog is a long-term commitment (10 to 15 years on the average).
- A dog is an ongoing expense. Don't buy one if you can't afford to properly care for it throughout its life.
- A dog is not a toy. It is not something to be put in the backyard to be played with only when you feel like it.

Do *not* buy a puppy because:

- You saw the puppy in a pet store and felt sorry for it.
- You want to surprise someone at a holiday.
- You want your child to have a dog because puppies and children are so cute together. Puppies and young children are not always good combinations. Bringing a dog into a family with children should be done only after careful consideration and planning. Do not buy a pet for a child until the child is old enough to understand how to be gentle with it. Parents must expect to be the primary caregiver of the puppy/dog.
- You saw one (on TV, at the park, at your neighbor's house) and you fell in love with it.
- You don't have time for your present dog, so you want him to have a “companion.” If you don't have time for one dog, you won't have time for two,
- Someone had a litter of puppies and they are so cute you just had to take one home with you.

Mixed breed or purebred?

There are exceptions to the advantages and disadvantages listed below. But they are true oftener than not.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Mixed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • less initial cost • less likely to have genetic defects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • probably little knowledge of history • little knowledge of heritage • probably poor pre and post-natal care
Pure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • probable knowledge of history • knowledge of heritage • probably good pre- and post-natal care • pride of ownership • some activities are open only to purebreds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more initial cost • possibility of genetic defects

Adult or puppy?

Not all adult dogs available for adoption are unwanted cast-offs. Some well-loved dogs must be rehomed if the owner dies, or a family member becomes allergic, or for other reasons that do not reflect on the dog. Show or working dogs may "retire" from their careers at young ages and be available to go to good caring homes.

Advantages

Disadvantages

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| Adult | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• See finished product• No puppy problems• Better choice for absentee family (one where everyone is gone all day) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lose best training opportunity• May inherit other's problems |
| Puppy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cute• Best training opportunity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can't see finished product• Puppy problems (housebreaking, chewing, etc.)• Puppies must be constantly supervised• They are a poor choice for absentee family |

Choosing a Breed

Whether you want a purebred or mixed breed you will want to choose a dog that fits your lifestyle. Make a list of breeds or characteristics you particularly like. Use the library and Internet to find out about breeds that interest you. Research the breeds thoroughly to make sure that you are choosing the right breed for you and your family. Subscribe to an email list for the breed that you are interested in. Ask questions to find out what the breed is really like.

Coat: If you are allergic, can't stand dog hair in the house, or you don't have the time to brush the dog regularly, look for a breed with a smooth or wire coat. (Note: if someone in the family is allergic, be sure that having a dog at all will be possible.)

Size: If you have limited space, look for smaller or less active breeds.

Temperament/activity level: Various breeds were developed for different purposes, and their temperaments reflect this. In general, you can predict how your dog will react by looking at what the breed was created to do. You can determine trainability by the amount of training that was necessary for that task.

Even mixed breeds will share the characteristics of their several ancestors -- if you don't know, your best guess is based on what breed the dog looks like.

You will probably be happiest with a dog whose temperament fits your lifestyle.

- If you are fairly sedentary, choose one of the breeds that do not require a lot of exercise. Consider dogs that were bred to be companions, such as the Toy breeds.
- If you are active and are planning on getting a dog that can go jogging with you, try some of the Sporting or Herding breeds that have a higher energy level.
- If you have young children, consider getting a larger dog who will not be as easily hurt by children sitting on them or tugging on their fur. Avoid dogs that tend to be nervous.
- Beware of "faddy" breeds made popular by a current movie or other publicity. No breed is good for everyone.
- Beware of "rare" breeds. Most are rare for a reason. If you choose either of these last two cases, be especially thorough in your research.

Where to Find Your Dog

WARNING! Pet stores and other sources that sell dogs they did not breed themselves buy their stock from puppy mills, farms that mass produce puppies as a commodity. These farms use poor quality breeding stock and the animals are kept in cages all their lives. As a result, puppies from this type of environment are plagued with health problems, and many of them never adapt to life among people. Even if the shops describe their source as a "broker," the broker bought from a puppy mill. Some will tell you that they bought from "hobby" breeders or other individuals. However, **no reputable breeder sells to anyone except the person who will actually own the dog.**

Sources for Finding Good Dogs

- **Your Veterinarian** - Ask your vet if he/she knows of any breeders of the breed you are looking for. Your vet knows who the breeders are that take good care of their breeding stock and do genetic testing. However, there are few quality breeders in Juneau.
- **Ads (Classified, Magazine or Internet)** - Be very careful when purchasing a puppy through an advertisement. Responsible breeders only breed to improve the breed and often place their puppies only through referrals. Some breeders advertise in *Dog World* or *Dog Fancy*. Some are reputable and some are not. Buying sight unseen is tricky at best. Most reputable breeder will require that you come to pickup the puppy. Find someone (A CKCOJ member will be glad to assist.) who can help you evaluate the breeder. The Internet is another source where you can find both truly responsible breeders and real scumbags. **Get references.**
- **Capital Kennel Club of Juneau** - Contact someone in our local dog club. It doesn't have to be a person with the breed you are interested in. A club member should be able to give you some help regarding specific guidelines. Attend some of our obedience classes. Observe the dogs in the classes. If you like a particular dog, talk to the owner. Tell the instructor what you are looking for and ask for advice. CKCOJ Agility or Obedience Trials are another good way to observe many dogs working with their owners. Our members love to talk dogs!
- **Breed rescue** - Some dogs are fine; others are second-hand puppy mill dogs with all the problems of both. Most will need a period of adjustment and training in order to fit into a new home. Many cost more than their value to you. You may have trouble getting rescue organizations to ship a dog to you in Juneau, so be prepared to travel to pick your dog up.
- **Breed clubs** - You will find them listed in the internet under their American or United Kennel Club affiliation. They will weed out the worst of the breeders -- usually -- but you must do your homework. Again, be prepared to travel, as most reputable breeders will not ship to you sight unseen.
- **Animal shelter** - The Gastineau Humane Society is a good source for mixed-breed dogs and paperless purebreds. Their dogs are temperament-tested, and have some basic obedience lessons. Selection is limited and there is a waiting list for small dogs.

Evaluating a Breeder

If it is possible to visit the breeder, you can learn a lot. The kennel may consist of outside runs and exercise yards or it may simply be their home, but it should be clean. Puppies should be clean and their area should be free of excrement.

Puppies - Are the puppies kept in the house near people and everyday activities or in a kennel? Human contact is very important in the first few weeks of life in order for the dog to bond to humans. You want puppies that have been raised in constant contact with people and household events and sounds.

Other dogs - Observe the other dogs on the premises.

- Are their coats clean and brushed? Do they have fresh water and a clean kennel?
- Do they move around easily and appear to be healthy and happy?
- Are they friendly and outgoing toward people?
- Pay particular attention to older dogs. Do you **like** them? They are what your puppy will become.

If you cannot visit the kennel you will have to evaluate the breeder by telephone. **The first sign of a good breeder is their desire to place the dog appropriately.** A good breeder will probably appear at first reluctant to sell to you. Good breeders want to know if you will be a good placement for their breed.

- A good breeder knows the breed
- A good breeder will tell you about the breed problems (Here is where you need to have done your homework. If the breeder attempts to mislead you about what you know are problems with the breed, how can you trust any other information?)
- A good breeder has done ALL appropriate tests for the breed. Accept no excuses. Do your homework and know what should be done.
- A good breeder has a planned breeding program. They know specifically why they bred that particular male and female. They have few litters per year -- usually not more than two. A good test is to ask, "Do you take credit cards?" If the breeder says yes, they are breeding commercially, not selectively in most cases. However, some reputable breeders have businesses, such as boarding or grooming, and do not breed irresponsibly.
- A good breeder is actively involved in dog clubs and/or shows. Responsible breeders do not breed varieties of their breed that are not acceptable in the show ring. Why does this matter? Generally, the unacceptable colors, sizes or markings carry with them genetic weaknesses or other difficulties. A mis-sized, mis-colored or mis-marked dog should always cost less, not more.
- If the breeder has more than one litter at the same time -- and this is generally a bad sign -- are the litters separated and identified? If not, do not even consider these dogs.
- Good breeders try to keep in contact with past puppy buyers. How many of them is the breeder still in contact with?

A responsible breeder should discuss with you:

- Where and how will you keep the dog? Do you have a fenced yard? Will the dog stay in in the house?
- What genetic problems are there in the breed? What testing can be done and at what age?
- Proper care and nutrition and genetic testing for breeding stock
- Socialization, training and obedience classes.
- Spay/neutering (if applicable)

The breeder should give you:

- Registration papers (No breeder may charge extra for registration papers, although some breeders withhold registration certificates on pet quality puppies pending proof of spay/neuter.)
- Health Guarantee - A written agreement stating the puppy is healthy and free from genetic problems. You should be able to have your new puppy examined by your own vet. If the puppy is found to be unsound, the puppy can be returned to the breeder with a full money back guarantee.
- All applicable test results for both parents

Choosing a Puppy

Observe the litter and look for the puppy who:

- Is active and playful (keep in mind, puppies sleep a lot and it takes them a while to wake up).
- Eagerly greets people and does not appear shy.
- Has no sign of discharge from the eyes, nose, or ears. Gums should be pink and firm.
- Does not have a distended belly (not to be confused with a normally fat puppy)
- Moves around easily, with no signs of lameness. Look for a puppy that naturally stands square with all four feet facing forward and sits squarely. The best time to evaluate puppies for structure is at 8 weeks of age.
- Look for a puppy that naturally follows you.
- Watch the puppies' reactions to sounds. You want a dog that recovers easily and does not become hysterical over sudden sounds.
- Notice puppies that have the confidence to explore new areas without fear.
- Puppies should have had at least one set of shots and have been examined by a veterinarian.

Take the time to find the right dog for you; after all you will be together a long time!

Do not bring home a puppy unless:

- You have a fenced yard or safe area where the pup can be outdoors.
- The dog will be part of the family and have time in the house.
- You have dog-proofed your home.
- You have purchased a dog crate. (A crate makes house training easier and gives a puppy a "safe place" to relax).