

## Old Dog, New Digs: How to Prep for an Aging Pet

If you've never had a dog before, you might stare wide-eyed and full of wonder at the pound puppies with their big eyes and floppy ears. It can be difficult to choose the right pet, and there are a lot of considerations to make when considering age. It's important to keep in mind, though, that a young dog isn't the only option. Senior dogs can be a great addition to your family, and they come with the benefits of dog life experience. Here are some reasons to consider an older dog for a pet.

### Why adopt an older dog

First and foremost, when you open up your home to an aging animal, you're most likely saving that dog's life. And, an old dog already knows a thing or two about [obedience](#), explains Nicole Pajer of Cesar's Way. Other reasons to adopt an aging animal include:

- Older dogs tend to be calmer than puppies.
- Their personality is already established.
- Adult and senior dogs are less destructive.

Many parents believe that their children must have a puppy in order to grow and establish a bond. Nothing could be further from the truth, and many kids lose interest in having to take care of an energetic and clumsy canine companion. Training may be difficult and the novelty quickly wears off. That's often why so many puppies are [abandoned](#) or surrendered in the months after Christmas. People simply think they are ready for the responsibilities; often they're not.

### Which dog is *the* dog?

Before you jump headfirst into pet parenthood, you need to have a serious heart-to-heart with yourself to decide which dog is the dog for you. You'll need to consider your lifestyle and ability/willingness to modify your home for your upcoming furry friend. Many breeds require lots of outdoor space and exercise while others are content with a sunny apartment balcony and plenty of couch time. Other considerations include whether you have children and, if so, their ages, as not all dogs or breeds fare well in a home with tiny humans. Aggression usually isn't an issue, but overly-energetic play or a past bad experience and fear of ill-behaved children can be.

If you've never really been around dogs, you may wish to test the waters ahead of time to see if there are potential allergies that you're unaware of. Even if you determine that you are allergic to certain pets, you can reduce the severity of symptoms by creating an allergen-free room and installing a whole-home HEPA filter. The ASPCA offers more information on how to live with [pets and allergies](#).

Animal Planet's Dog Breed Selector and [Dog Breed Questionnaire](#) can help you pick the perfect pet for you and your family.

## Getting ready

Once you've made the decision to bring a new dog into your family – and home – you may need to make a few modifications to make your time together more enjoyable. A good place to start is by providing your dog elevated food and water bowls. If arthritis is a problem, you may also wish to build a ramp so that he can more easily enter and exit the home. Likewise, Redfin suggests adding stairs to furniture and, if you plan to sleep with your [elderly pet](#), your bed. Before bringing him home, talk with the shelter or foster to see which food he's been eating. While it's perfectly acceptable to change his food for the better, don't do it all at once, which could upset his stomach.

Your newfound best friend may be nervous or fearful at first. Be patient and offer him plenty of time to get to know his new family and surroundings. You can bond with your pet by taking him for walks and getting down on the floor at his level. It may take a few days or weeks before you learn each other's routine and personality, but in time it will smooth out.

Having a dog is a great responsibility that comes with even greater rewards. Research your breed selection and don't jump headfirst into your decision. You and your pet will be much happier together if you make the proper preparations and take the time to modify your home to suit everyone's needs.



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