

## Can You Really Be a Dog's Best Friend? A Top 10 List

I think that's a valid question, and I don't ask it lightly. The short answer is yes. The long answer may be no, and let me tell you why.

I think I'll start things off with a short story. It's interesting and I think it will shed some light on what I am thinking.

Way back in 1999, I was attending graduate school at Binghamton University. I lived on the third floor of an old house in a very small apartment. The house was in a rather congested part of town, so all of the residents could get a very clear picture of what was happening in the neighborhood around them. From my apartment, I had a pretty good vantage point of a few backyards that were close by.

As you could imagine, while attending graduate school, I was required to study for a good portion of the day and night. There was no way to get around it and much of it had to be done in my apartment. In order to have a good studying session, I needed quiet. Thinking back, I should have moved into a more sparse part of town.

The day after I moved in, I remember looking out the window into the backyard across the street. There were two dogs lying down on a dirt area. They were tethered together by the same dog leash, a piece of one tied to the other. Their heads were about a foot apart and they had no where to go. Every time someone passed on the sidewalk, they would stand up and run to the chain link fence, barking. This went on day after day. Eventually, someone from the neighborhood called the ASPCA and had the dogs removed. The owners were charged with having the dogs outside without shelter and a few other things.

This brings me to the point of this piece. Why do people bring dogs into their homes, when they clearly don't have the means to properly care for them?

I'm sure we have all seen it a thousand times; the messiest house on the road with three viscous dogs chained to a stump in the front yard, the college students who thought it would be fun to get a "house" puppy, the overworked parents who thought it would be a good idea to get their young children an active puppy to play with.

What's the common theme that runs across all three examples above? Bad choices. I think the mistakes many people make are 1) they don't understand that owning a dog is a huge responsibility and 2) dogs can lead miserable lives, if not taken care of properly.

Here is a (hopefully helpful) list of reminders that you should consider before bringing a dog into your family:

1. Dogs bark. If you like your neighbors and want them to continue liking you, be sure to consider this when choosing the breed of dog you get.
2. Dogs eat. If you have trouble paying your own grocery bill, think about the extra expense of a big bag of dog food once a month.
3. Dogs need to go to the doctor. If you are having trouble paying for your own health care, think about what you are going to do the day your dog needs to have an operation.
4. Dogs need to relieve themselves. If you like to snuggle under your warm covers at 5AM in the middle January, think about the feeling you will have when your new dog starts barking to go outside at that time.
5. Dogs need to play. If you work late and no one is home, who will be there to take the dog outside to burn off all the energy they have?
6. Dogs need love. Are you ready to spend at least two hours a day with your dog?
7. Dogs need space. Do you have the room for a dog that may become hyper when it gets excited?
8. Dogs are not welcome in many rental units. Do you rent? Be aware that by having a dog, you are limiting yourselves to about 10% of available units for rent.
9. Dogs require patience. Take a good look at yourself. Have you ever lost your temper? Many dogs may do things that will upset you.
10. Dogs need to be licensed. What are the rules of your area when it comes to dog ownership?

The above list is not meant to be depressing. It's meant to give you a realistic view of what you can expect after you bring that cute, cuddly little puppy into your home. I have owned many dogs and I write from experience.

A good friend of mine owns two rather large dogs that he adopted from a friend during his senior year of college. They are both about five years old now. He loves the dogs, but feels he may have made a mistake. He may not have been ready for them. I remember asking him how he feels about owning the dogs, to which he replied, "Yeah, that was pretty much the biggest mistake I ever made."

Now, let's discuss the brighter side of things. If you have looked over the above list and think you might be ready to give a dog a new home, good for you. Just be sure to look for that dog in the right places. There are many dogs in shelters across this country that are just waiting for someone like you to walk through the door. Do the right thing and adopt. You'll be glad you did.

### About the Author

This article was written by [Jay Gaulard](#) on behalf of <http://www.petclassifieds.us>, a popular [pet classifieds](#) website.

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