

A NEW PUPPY

Wow, what a wonderful idea. A new puppy in the home! The kids have been hounding you, your partner wants one, you live on your own and decide a companion is just what you need.

Whatever your circumstances, the idea of a new puppy is just p-e-r-f-e-c-t. You walk past a pet store and there are the cutest puppies staring at you through the window. You can't resist those huge eyes and soft fur, the little kisses or that energetic prance around the glass enclosure. The words dance around your head as you stare at the "purebred Labrador" or Bichon x Maltese puppies. You can hear the excitement in the kids' voices and visualise their eyes when you bring home the newest edition to the family. How to choose, the cutest, most boisterous, quiet or lonely one, whatever that attracted you, your new puppy in tow and enough equipment to need to add an additional room, you head for home. The pet store has advised you to buy the best dog food there is for puppies, new collars, leads, puppy bed, blankets, puppy books, puppy bowls and toys.

Joy is always short lived when something is bought on impulse. That cute little bundle cries all night for the first few nights, causing tempers to rise from lack of sleep, poos and pees in the home causing a mess. The kids fast outgrow the new toy because it bites and the puppy quickly grows into a young juvenile. Often with no education, running rampant through the home, your garden, biting, digging and barking excessively. Suddenly the puppy is no longer welcome in the home and the nuisance must go.

Most people think this just would not happen to them. The unfortunate truth is it does. Unless you do your homework first, there is a strong chance that your dog will end up at the RSPCA looking for a new home or euthanized due to behavioural issues. *A Leading Veterinarian Behaviouralist Dr Ian Dunbar is quoted as saying, within two days of bringing a new pup home; many people have signed their death warrant.*

When we buy our puppy we must remember we are its guardian. It is up to us to understand that raising a puppy is a lot like raising children. Dogs are not children but both need to be taught how to behave appropriately around the family and the public, and to respect others. They need to be able to understand rules and we need to provide boundaries and to set clear consistent guidelines for their behaviour. In order to set our dogs up to succeed in life we must teach them the survival skills required to live in a human world. This means educating yourself before and after you buy a puppy. Just doing a puppy preschool is not enough, education is ongoing.

Do your homework, don't impulse buy. Look for reputable breeders where you can view both mother and father. Source Delta Trainers in your area (www.dpdt.com.au) who work with reward based training methods. These people can help you with your training guidance to a physically and behaviourally healthy puppy.

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Below is a list of just some of the things to think about PRIOR to getting a puppy.

- What sort of puppy are we looking for?
- Have we researched the breed enough to understand the type of dog we are looking at?
- Do we source a purebred breeder where we can view the parents or do we buy from the pet store or the RSPCA?
- Does the breed suit our lifestyle?
- Do we have the house/yard space for this type of dog? (A border collie needs continual exercise and a huge backyard to run around in).
- Do we have the time to spend with our dog?
- Are we prepared to put the time and effort into training our pet?
- Do we understand that a dog is for life? (Dogs may live up to 16 years or more)

Can we afford to keep a puppy? The cost of a new puppy is outlined below: (Remember this is an estimate only based on your puppy's first year of life.)

Description	Approx Cost
Initial purchase price of puppy	Free
Vaccinations	\$3,000
De-sexing (male)	\$145
Micro chipping	\$170
Flea and tick prevention	\$50
Puppy School	\$100
Health check	\$130
De-sexing (female)	\$45
Heartworm prevention (vaccination)	\$200
Intestinal worming tablets	\$75
Council registration fees	\$100
Obedience classes	\$80
Food	\$200
Toys	\$520
Collars and leads (at least 2, allowing for growth)	\$50
Car harnesses (at least 2, allowing for growth)	\$80
Play pen or kennel	\$60
ID Tag	\$110
Sundries (brushes etc)	\$15
Bedding	\$50
	\$100

Total, not including purchase of puppy just for the first year of its life \$2,110.

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