

Toby



Adopting a Pet

Do your homework. Find out what your new pet will require. Make sure that you can meet these needs for years to come. Vet care, grooming, professional training, boarding while away and exercise are all to be considered. Start your homework long before picking out your new pet.

Do get your new pet from a rescue or shelter. Locate a group that can help you find what you are looking for in a new family member, but remember to be patient. Do not buy a pet at a pet store or online. These animals often come from deplorable conditions. You may be supporting a puppy mill or similar by paying for that doggy in the window. Most shelters take in stray animals as well as those surrendered or given up by someone. Some rescues are breed specific (only dealing with one or two breeds) and others are called “all breed” rescues which may take in mixes and purebreds.

Do pick your pet based on personality. If you have a particular breed in mind go meet multiple dogs of that breed. Remember that animals are not clones of one another even if they look similar. Getting the same breed as your Uncle Bill’s perfect dog or the one from the movie does not mean that you will get the same.

Do ask questions and talk to staff. What do they know about the animal? What has been their observations of the animal? Remember that some dogs (and cats) may act differently in a kennel than they would in a less stressful situation. If adopting from a shelter ask if you can take the dog to a quiet spot, in a room away from the noise or if that is not available, outside. Remember that this may be the animal’s first time outside of the kennel in hours, so if the dog is more worried about peeing than meeting you just be patient. Many people want “love at first sight”, but this does not often happen. Do not judge too quickly. Plan to spend 15 minutes - 1 hr with each prospective new pet. It is a big decision so DO take your time!

Do ask about the fees involved in adopting your new pet. Ask what the fee will cover. It will often cover their shots and spay/neuter surgery. You will also want to ask if the animal has been dewormed or treated for fleas recently. Adoption fees are small compared to what you would pay if you had to take a dog or cat to the vet for shots and a spay/neuter surgery. Adoption fees are a small price to pay for your new family member.

Do consider puppy versus adult. Everyone agrees that puppies (and kittens) are super cute. Make sure that you have the time and energy to care for one properly before adopting. Adult dogs and cats are often the ones that most need a home as they can be overlooked due to their age. Adults and even seniors have a lot to offer and often do not require early morning potty breaks. With young puppies plan to take them out 15 or more times a day for potty breaks.

continued ...

email: hazelmitchell@outlook.com 🐾 [tweet@MeetToby](https://twitter.com/MeetToby) 🐾 www.hazelmitchell.com/Toby

Toby. Copyright © 2016 by Hazel Mitchell. Reproduced by permission of the publisher, Candlewick Press, Somerville, MA.

Do set the rules before your new family member arrives. Is the dog allowed on the furniture? Who will walk the dog? Make sure that everyone in the house can agree to the rules and make sure the rules are fair for a new animal to live with. If your rules are too tough at first it may be impossible for an animal. Be realistic with your expectations.

Do get the house ready for their arrival. Your new dog or cat will not know the rules of your house, so you should try to make it as easy as possible for them. Put priceless antiques and nice shoes out of reach. If you do not want the piano leg or sunglasses used as chew toys than you will need to make sure you keep them out of reach. Plan to keep new pets out of some rooms until they can be trained and trusted to comply with your house rules. Purchase a crate, beds and toys, leash, collar, harness and tags before their arrival. Food toys like Kongs are a great way to occupy dogs. Cats will need plenty of designated scratching posts. Fenced in yards are often times a great addition to the house for a new dog.

Do be patient when bringing a new pet into the house. Animals are often nervous about going to a new home. Do not overwhelm them with lots of excitement and people. Keep things relatively calm and quiet as they adjust to you and the house. Some animals may not want lots of petting or handling when they first arrive. Pay attention to their needs.

Do introductions slowly. Set everyone up for a nice calm first introduction. Remember what they say about first impressions. If your new dog is allowed to chase the cat around the house upon arrival your new dog may take this as a great game that should be played often and you may find you have a cat living in the basement or under the bed. Make sure that everyone is safe and being taught polite greetings from day one. Do not leave pets to “sort it out”. As the human you are responsible for everyones safety and wellbeing.

Do teach children to be respectful of your new pet. Many dogs and cats do not like to be hugged or picked up. Teach children how to appropriately handle animals. Do not allow children to sit on or climb on dogs, ever. Always monitor dogs with children. Go to *Doggone Safe* for tips on dog bite prevention:

http://www.doggonesafe.com/dog_bite_preventio_tips

Do train your new dog. Dogs are not born knowing human rules or language. Your dog will not know what you want unless you teach them. This will take time. Do not punish your dog if they get it wrong. Find more information here on how to train using positive reinforcement:

<http://ppgworldservices.com/2015/04/21/positive-reinforcement-training-tips/>



Breanna Norris is the owner and operator of Canine Insights, LLC a dog training business in central Maine. Breanna teaches private lessons and group classes. She also fosters dogs and volunteers with two local animal shelters.

**You can find *Canine Insights* on facebook at:
<https://www.facebook.com/CanineInsights/>**

You can reach Breanna at breanna.gn@gmail.com

Photograph © 2016 Breanna Norris

TOBY - written and illustrated by Hazel Mitchell is a heartwarming story about the growing bond between a child and a new pet—inspired by the author’s experience with a rescue dog of the same name. From Candlewick Press September 2016.

Disclaimer - All information provided here and taken, is at the reader's own risk.