

HOW TO FIND YOUR DREAM DOG



DIXIE TENNY

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INTRODUCTION



So you've decided to adopt a dog. How exciting! What kind?

The cute kind? Wait, all puppies are cute! But will you choose a puppy, or maybe an adolescent dog, or an adult? Will your new dog be big, medium, small, or, with a mixed-breed puppy, a bit of a surprise? Long hair, short hair, curly hair, wiry hair, no hair? Protective, or a social butterfly? Funny and goofy, or serious-natured? Very active, moderately active, a couch potato?

Hold on a minute, I hear you say. Why do I have to answer all these questions? It's just a dog! Why can't I just go out and pick up a dog, any dog? A dog is a dog is a dog, right?

Well, actually...

Every dog is different. And not just in size, or fur, or the shape of their ears. Every dog is right for a different owner. The best dog for me may not be the best dog for you, and neither of our dogs might be the perfect pet for someone else.

Let's look at an example.

Family A's two children, ages four and six, had been pestering their parents for a puppy for months. Their parents didn't really want a dog but felt that it might be good for teaching the children responsibility. On Christmas morning, the parents presented the children with a wiggly lab mix pup they had gotten from a shelter the day before. There

had only been one young puppy at the shelter, so although the parents had hoped for something small and quiet, they reluctantly took what was available.

The children were thrilled at first. Then the puppy started jumping on them and licking their faces while they were trying to open their other presents. The more they pushed the puppy down, the more he jumped back up. When he wasn't jumping on them, he was exploring, chewing on wrapping paper and presents, and piddling on the carpet.

Finally, the pup was shut into the bathroom, where he barked and scratched the door nonstop for fifteen minutes. He must be hungry, the parents thought, and left the Christmas morning festivities to feed the puppy. When they opened the door they saw that paint was scratched off it and that there was poop smeared all over the floor, none of it anywhere near the newspaper they had laid out.

They took the puppy to the kitchen and while they were pouring his food into his bowl, he piddled again. He ate his food, and then pooped on the kitchen floor.

By this time the puppy stank of poo and the children ran screaming from the stinky pup. He gleefully chased after them all over the house, leaving poo paw prints all over the carpet. When he caught up to the four-year-old, he jumped on her back and knocked her down. As she screamed and cried, the parents deposited the puppy back into the bathroom. The next day, they returned the puppy to the shelter.

Two days later Family B arrived at the shelter. They hoped to adopt a puppy when they still had a few days of vacation to help him settle in. They were an active family with two pre-teen children and wanted a pup who could grow up to hike and camp with them. Their research indicated that a lab or lab mix would be a good choice. They had checked the shelter over Thanksgiving vacation but didn't find a good candidate. This time they saw the puppy that Family A had returned.

They took the lab puppy to the shelter's Get-Acquainted room and spent half an hour getting to know him. He was high-energy, but their calm behavior calmed him as well. They ignored his jumping up until he stopped jumping, petting him only when he stayed on all fours. Soon he wasn't jumping up at all. He loved lying on his back on the daughter's lap as she gently scratched his chest. They had brought some treats along, and found that this smart fellow could be easily guided to sit or lie down for a goodie. With the training to focus on, he became steady and responsive. They decided this was the pup for them and adopted him.

When the family got home, the children watched the puppy in their yard while their parents got the pup's area ready for him. The pup did his business, and the children played a game where they called him back and forth, crouching down so he didn't jump up, and rewarding him with a cuddly scratch-fest each time he arrived. When their parents called them inside, they carried the pup to the kitchen, which had

been gated off. A heavy water bowl and half a dozen toys of different kinds were set up on the floor.

The pup joyfully began to romp, play, and chew. Since he was very young and his day had been exciting already, he began to slow down after about ten minutes of play. Since the kids and their dad were in the kitchen watching him, they noticed as soon as the puppy's energy dropped. They took him back outside, where he immediately piddled. Back in the kitchen, the pup carried a chew toy to a soft towel and laid down to chew. Within two minutes he was sound asleep.

The family named their puppy Clark, after Clark Kent, because although he looked like an ordinary lab mix, they knew he was going to grow up to be a superdog.

Clark the lab puppy was a disaster for Family A, and the perfect puppy for Family B. The same dog, two completely different outcomes. Why?

I'll give you a hint: it didn't have anything to do with Clark himself.

The successful adoption of a puppy (or any age dog) begins with you. Puppies are not blank slates. There are wonderful puppies out there for almost all individuals and families. But as we see in the case of Family A and Family B, the same puppy isn't right for everyone.

This book will position you to be Family B - to find the right puppy, or dog, that will become a beloved part of your family.

First, we will look at everything that needs to be considered before you decide to adopt a puppy or a new adult dog. What did Family A do wrong? What did Family B do right? How can you, too, be successful from the very beginning?

Next, we will look at the process of choosing a puppy or dog. How do you know what type of puppy will be right for you? How do you choose the best individual for you from a litter? And is it possible that you might want to consider adopting an adolescent or adult dog instead?

Finally, we will consider all the ways you might acquire your puppy, from the promising to the potentially disastrous.

Most people spend hours researching a new mattress, days researching a new car, and weeks, months, even years researching a new home or new job. The time you spend finding the right item or situation is vital, because it will be part of your life for years to come. Yet almost no one spends more than a few minutes—long enough to look up the address of the nearest pet shop or shelter—researching the right canine companion for the next ten-to-fifteen years of their life. So like family A, they get a dog, any dog, and more often than not they don't keep it.

Every dog (other than the young puppies) that you see in a shelter is there because it was someone's wrong choice.

This doesn't have to happen. I don't want it to happen to any dog or any owner. I don't want it to happen to you. Each of

those dogs is still the right choice for someone. One of them might be right for you. If not, we can find the dog who is.

This book will help match you with your Dream Dog, a dog that will be a joy for you from the day it arrives in your home until the end of its life. It contains everything I've learned in more than thirty years of working with dogs and owners: the most and least successful reasons to get a dog; how to figure out what kind of dog is best for you; how to find that dream dog and bring it home. Since the majority of owners start with a puppy (and puppies require the most work), much of the book focuses only on puppies, but the final section takes the same principles and applies them to getting an adolescent or adult dog.

I've seen hundreds of families successfully adopt and form lifetime bonds with amazing dogs by following the practices in these pages. You, too, can find the dog of your dreams, one who is and will remain physically, mentally, and emotionally stable, and one who will always be "the best dog ever" until the end of its days.

Let's get you ready for your Dream Dog!