Is a Dog Right for You?

A Practical Self-Assessment & Readiness Checklist for Prospective Dog Owners

Bringing a dog into your life is a rewarding 10-to-15-year commitment. Review each category below honestly to evaluate whether your current lifestyle, housing, and budget are ready for a canine companion.

1. TIME & DAILY COMMITMENT

- [ ] **Daily Exercise & Mental Stimulation**
  I can commit at least 1 to 2 hours daily for dedicated walks, play sessions, and training, regardless of weather or work schedule.
- [ ] **Workplace Schedule & Absence**
  I am not routinely away from home for more than 8 to 10 hours without a plan for potty breaks (e.g., dog walker, midday check-in).
- [ ] **Patience for Training & Potty Routines**
  I am prepared to spend time on house training, obedience work, and addressing potential behavioral challenges without frustration.

2. FINANCIAL READINESS

- [ ] **Upfront Adoption & Setup Costs**
  I have budgeted for initial costs including adoption/breeder fees, spay/neuter, crate, leash, harness, bowls, and initial vet visits ($500 - $1,500+).
- [ ] **Routine Monthly Maintenance**
  My monthly budget comfortably accounts for high-quality food, flea/tick/heartworm preventatives, treats, and regular grooming ($100 - $200+/month).
- [ ] **Emergency Medical Reserve / Pet Insurance**
  I have emergency savings set aside or pet insurance secured to cover unexpected veterinary accidents or illnesses ($1,000+ potential expense).

3. LIVING SPACE & ENVIRONMENT

- [ ] **Pet-Friendly Housing & Rules**
  My landlord or HOA permits dogs, and I am aware of any specific breed, weight, or count restrictions in my rental or community agreement.
- [ ] **Safe Home Environment**
  My living space is secure (fenced yard or safe neighborhood walking route) and free of toxic hazards accessible to a curious dog.
- [ ] **Tolerance for Mess & Wear**
  I am comfortable with pet hair, occasional mud, shed fur, and minor wear-and-tear on furniture or flooring.

4. LONG-TERM COMMITMENT & HOUSEHOLD SYNERGY

- [ ] **10–15 Year Horizon**
  I am prepared to care for a dog throughout major life shifts (moving, job changes, new family members, retirement).

- [ ] **Household & Allergy Check**
  Everyone in my household is aligned on getting a dog, and no family member has severe unmanageable pet allergies.

- [ ] **Travel & Boarding Contingency**
  I have a plan for trusted pet care, dog sitters, or boarding facilities when I travel for vacations or work.

Checklist Results & Assessment

- **10–12 Boxes Checked:** You are in a great position to welcome a dog into your home! Start researching breeds or visiting local shelters.
- **7–9 Boxes Checked:** You're on the right track, but might need to adjust your schedule, budget, or living arrangement before adopting.
- **Below 7 Boxes Checked:** Consider waiting or exploring options like fostering, dog-sitting, or volunteering at a shelter to gain experience first.

Provided as an educational resource for prospective pet owners.