



Thinking of adopting a dog?

Before making a decision, ask yourself these questions:

Can you make a long-term commitment?

Dogs typically live for 10-15 years. During this time you will likely experience many changes in your life—moving to a new house or apartment, changing jobs, getting married, having children, getting other pets, and traveling. Before you adopt, think about how you will care for your dog and provide a loving home in the face of changes in your life.

Can you provide a suitable living environment?

While some dogs can live in small living spaces, all dogs need exercise every day so there are things you need to consider before adopting, regardless of how big or small your residence is. Do you have a space such as a fenced yard where your dog can freely exercise? Are you willing to go outside and play with your dog several times each day? Are you able to walk your dog at least once a day? Even dogs with fenced yards need walks for mental stimulation. Where will the dog sleep? Where will the dog be kept while you are at work? Are you willing to accept the additional housecleaning required with a dog in the home? If you are considering a puppy, who will be home during the day for the first few months to housetrain the puppy? Are you willing to take the dog or puppy to obedience classes to help them integrate successfully with your family?

Can you afford the costs of dog ownership?

As you can see in the table below, the basic costs of caring for a dog can be up to \$2,000 a year, with initial up front costs of close to \$500. In addition, the costs of veterinary care for illnesses and accidents can cost anywhere from hundreds of dollars to thousands of dollars.

Initial Costs:		Typical Yearly Costs (based on average 50 lb dog):		
Adoption fee (may vary)	\$150	Food	1 bag (40 lb) high quality dry food @ \$50 per month	\$600
Food and water dishes	\$20	Treats	1 lg box biscuits, 2 bag of tasty chews @ \$20 per month	\$240
Collar and identification tag	\$20	Veterinary care	Yearly visit - exam and vaccinations	\$120
Brush for grooming	\$15	Pet health insurance	Basic coverage \$35 per month	\$420
Bed	\$50	Supplies	Chews, toys, shampoo, blankets (\$25 per month)	\$300
Toys	\$60	Flea Treatment	Treatment from May to October	\$45
Crate	\$100	Grooming	4 times per year @ \$60	\$240
Food & treats	\$40			
Total	\$455		Total	\$1,965

Do you have time to spend with a dog?

Dogs require a lot of attention from their human family and time spent playing and cuddling. If you are away from your home for long periods of time, this may not be the best situation for adopting a pet. Dogs left alone for long periods may show anxiety, feel isolated or ignored, and may develop behaviours such as chewing furniture or damaging walls or doors. If left crated in this situation, they will resort to focusing the behaviours on themselves, such as obsessive licking (causing hot spots) or chewing at their joints, or may injure their paws trying to paw their way out of the crate.

How will you handle potential behaviour issues?

It is important for you learn about normal dog behaviours before adopting, and how to deal with inappropriate behaviour such as chewing, biting or “marking.” The Nova Scotia SPCA can provide you with information on dog behaviour and you can also find a lot of information on websites such as the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (www.cfhs.ca).

Is everyone in your household supportive of welcoming a dog into the home?

When you adopt a dog, everyone in your household becomes a part of the dog’s life and he or she becomes a part of theirs. If you have children, they need to demonstrate respect for animals and be able to learn and understand how to appropriately interact with dogs. If anyone in your home objects to having a dog or is known to be allergic to dogs, you should not consider adopting at this time. If you already have other pets, have you considered how to integrate your new dog with your existing furry friends, and what you will do if they do not get along?

If you decide that you are ready to adopt, contact your local SPCA, fill out an application form, meet the dogs and puppies available for adoption, and consult with staff or volunteers to select an appropriate dog for you. Take your time—having a pet will change your life, and you need to be confident in your choice.

If you have realized this is not a good time in your life to adopt a dog, consider volunteering with the SPCA or other rescue groups in your community, or ask the SPCA about fostering. You’ll get to spend time with dogs while contributing to a great cause.