



The Perfect Dog

By Barbara Kahn

from *The Burlington County Woman*

Okay, let's be realistic. There is really no PERFECT dog. The best dogs are the ones with good genetics behind them, sensible upbringing, good health care, sufficient training (formal or informal) and an owner who has selected a dog that is appropriate for his or her lifestyle.

People often choose dogs for reasons that may not be conducive to a happy life together. Some of the reasons I've heard include the following: no shedding, hypoallergenic; my parents had one; I saw one at a dog show (TV show, neighbor had one, etc.); my child loves this breed (Dalmatian, St. Bernard and other movie breeds); size.

Not all of these reasons are inherently unsound, but often they lead to selecting a dog that is totally inappropriate. And not all people should have dogs. Some should stick to cats, birds and porcelain pets.



Let's look at the fallacies behind these choices.





- ❖ **Non-shedding:** This limits prospective owners to terrier-types and poodles. Every other dog (including the infamous doodles) shed. So do we. The difference between long and smooth-coated dogs is not the quantity of hair dropped but the length.
- ❖ **Hypoallergenic:** Frequently an allergy to dogs is not to the coat but to the dog's saliva. Regular bathing and not letting the dog lick the allergic person plus a variety of products available over the counter can cut down, but probably not eliminate, this problem.
- ❖ **My parents had one:** yes and you loved it. However, your mom probably stayed home all day with the dog and you don't remember how much effort went into raising it.
- ❖ **I saw one on TV, dog show, neighbor's house:** TV/movie dogs are exceedingly well-trained, selected for biddability and live with or kenneled with professional handlers. While certain dogs may appear to be very appealing, living with them can be a veritable nightmare if the conditions are not right.
- ❖ **Picking a dog off a site on the internet:** Can't meet the parents. Can't see if the web site really reflects how the animal was raised. No recourse if things don't work out. If all they want is your credit card, run like hell.
- ❖ **My child wants one:** And that child will not and should not be the one primarily responsible for caring for this dog. The child will develop other interests, get bored, be intimidated by and be jealous of attention given to the dog.
- ❖ **Two dogs are better than one:** only if you have multiple personality disorder.
- ❖ **Two same gender puppies from the same litter.** Ol vey.





Pick a dog for lifestyle:

1. Activity level of household
2. Age and temperament of children
3. Other pets
4. Living situation : housing development, woods, farm, condo
5. How much training you're willing to do
6. How much you'll groom or spend on grooming
7. Size vs. energy level
8. Intelligence vs. keeping the dog mentally/physically stimulated

