

Are You a Responsible Pet Parent? Take this quiz and see how you score on the dog-savvy meter!

Where did you get your dog?

1. A pet shop that sells puppies.
2. The Wal-Mart Parking lot (some guy in a van, giving away free puppies).
3. I saw an ad in the newspaper.
4. I found my dog roaming as a stray, or my dog found me.
5. From a responsible, well-known and reputable breeder.
6. From a rescue organization or shelter that interviewed me to make sure I got the right dog for me.
7. From a person who raised the litter with much daily human contact, and did not release them until after 8-9 weeks of age.

On what basis did you choose your dog (or, what made you decide to get this dog?)

1. Impulse. I saw him in one of the locations in the previous question, and couldn't resist his cute self.
2. Pity. I wanted to "save" the poor puppy from the evil pet shop that had him for sale.
3. I needed a last-minute birthday/Christmas/anniversary gift for the spouse/kids.
4. The kids needed a dog to teach them some responsibility. Plus, they've been begging for a dog.
5. When I found the dog as a stray, I put up flyers and notified vets and shelters to try to find his owner. I took him to a vet to have him scanned for a microchip and checked for health problems. When no owner came forward, knowing I was able to take on the responsibility of caring for and training the dog, I kept him and he is now a member of the family.
6. We put a lot of thought into it, waited until the kids were grown up enough to handle the responsibility and not torment the dog, researched various breed types thoroughly, decided on the type of dog we wanted (like, terrier, herding breed, etc.). And looked for a good breeder of this kind of dog, or went to the breed rescue, petfinder.com or other place where I might find a pure or mixed breed with these qualities, and correct temperament for my family.
7. Add to #5 that I asked many questions about the sire and dam, and inquired of any potential hereditary defects, like hip dysplasia, deafness, retinal atrophy, etc. and asked how the puppies were housed/raised up until they were old enough to find homes. Or, if a rescue or adult dog, I asked to find out what kind of socialization the dog had during critical socialization periods.
8. Add to #6 that I found puppies whose breeder had them puppy-tested at age 49 days, and I was able to find the right one to work out well with my family and the "career" I have planned for my dog as a friend and life-long active companion.

Where does your dog stay?

1. He has free run of the yard, but usually stays around the house or on the porch.
2. On a chain in the yard with an insulated, dry doghouse.
3. In a fenced yard with someplace to go to get out of the elements (doghouse, porch, shed...)
4. In a kennel run with an insulated, dry doghouse or access to the indoors (house, shed, barn)
5. My dog is always with me. I leave him in the car when I go to the store; in the house when I'm home.
6. In the garage or basement while we're at work and at night; gets to come in to spend time with us in the evenings.
7. In the house in his room or a crate (or where ever his bed is), while we're gone, and loose with us in the home when we're there.
8. My dog accompanies me to places where he is welcome and if he can't come with me, he has a climate controlled house to stay in with access to a doggie door and a fully fenced private yard.
9. At doggie day care while we're at work, and in the house with us in the evenings and nights.

What does your dog do for fun and exercise on a regular basis?

1. Digs holes in the back yard, chases squirrels and barks at the mailman.
2. Seasonal activities, like hunting, or dog sled racing only.
3. Goes on daily walks through the neighborhood on leash with some off-leash running at a park or back yard.
4. Plays fetch, Frisbee, or other games in the yard.
5. Belongs to doggie organizations, like a flyball team, agility club, Dog Scout troop, or Therapy group.
6. You name it: Frisbee, Dock Diving, Agility, Herding, Sledding, Flyball, Rally Obedience, hiking... If you can do it with a dog, count us IN!

Where does your dog get to go with you?

1. Nowhere. My dog is too ill-behaved to take anywhere in public.
2. My relatives' homes and rides in the car when I go to town.
3. Anywhere dogs are allowed: ballgames, fairs, pet stores, camping, my work place...
4. Everywhere I can take my dog, plus vacations, camping and special dog activity camps.
5. Number 3 plus Dog Scout Troop functions, dog club activities, various competitions for fun, vacations.

What does your dog eat?

1. Table Scraps and leftovers.
2. The cheapest food I can find. I've never really read the labels (I assumed it's all the same.)
3. Canned dog food from the supermarket.
4. Dry dog food from the supermarket.
5. The best food I can afford that is complete and balanced for my dog's age and needs.
6. Quality meat, higher cost, processed dog food from a distributor or pet store chain.
7. Meat based raw-food diet prepared especially for the dog by me, following dietary recommendations or a frozen or freeze dried variety from a respected company.
8. A meat based, all natural, all organic, Kosher, or other special diet that I know, because of the research I have done, is best for my dog.

How's your communication?

How many words (cues) does your dog know and understand?

1. Not many. I'm not sure he even knows what his name is.
2. A few "survival" commands: Sit, Come, Stay.
3. Basic Obedience: Heel, Sit, Down, Come, Stand, Good Dog.
4. All of #3, plus "good manners" cues, like: Off, Wait, Go to your Place, Quiet, Leave-it
5. All of #4, plus an array of cute tricks, like: Shake, Roll Over, Speak...
6. Add to #5 more advanced tricks, like retrieve, scent discrimination, etc.
7. Including #6, an arsenal of cues used to do the many sports and activities we pursue, like agility cues, herding cues, tracking, Frisbee, flyball, sledding, therapy work, or other interests.
8. If any of the above include the word, "NO!" or any profanity shouted at the dog, deduct one point from your score. These words do not convey any meaning to your dog, and only serve to strain the relationship. If these words are NOT in your dog's "vocabulary" then give yourself one bonus point.

What do the words "Dog Training" mean to you?

1. Sending your dog away to school for training.

2. Obedience Training. That is something that only the people who want to get fancy obedience titles on their dogs do.
3. Taking an obedience class at a local club or pet shop, to make your dog a better companion.
4. Being my dog's teacher and guide, reinforcing behaviors I want to see more of, and redirecting but not rewarding the behaviors I want to never see again. Teaching my dog 24-7, like I would a child, from the very first instant he comes into my home, so that each day is a new learning experience for him. I understand that if you're not the *Trainer*, you become the *Trainee*. You don't have to wait to enroll in a class to teach things to your dog.

How do you train your dog?

1. I've never taken a training class or really taught my dog anything. He just sort of "hangs out."
2. I try to maintain dominance over my dog. When he makes a mistake or challenges me, I do an alpha roll-over to show him who is boss.
3. I get a rolled-up newspaper or flyswatter when he starts acting cocky, and sometimes I don't even have to hit him with it. He really respects me when I have the paper or the swatter.
4. Collar and leash. I give commands in a firm tone of voice. I give corrections when the dog is wrong, and praise with a happy voice when the dog is good.
5. I use a system where the consequences determine the dog's behavior, and I control the consequences. I use a reward marker, like a clicker, to help the dog learn that a pleasant consequence will follow a behavior that I like.
6. Add to #4 that I also try to never use punishment, as it strains the relationship.

Do you own any books or videos on how to be a better pet parent? (like training videos, how-to books...)

1. No. I got the dog for free, so I couldn't see spending a lot of money on him for books and videos.
2. Yes. I got a "Know Your(breed)" book.
3. Yes. I have several books on dog selection, care and training. I've even read one of them.
4. Yes, I have videos and books on every dog topic... Training, behavior, specialty sports, aggression, animal communication, health and first aid for dogs, etc. I've got a regular dog library and love to learn new things.
5. Add to #4: and I constantly look for new books with new training ideas and techniques, or about new activities which will even further enrich my life with my dog.
6. Add to #5: and I also subscribe to one or more "doggie" periodicals, like the Whole Dog Journal, Dog Fancy, Dog World, Bark, Off Lead, Bloodlines, etc. or on-line groups that focus on dog training using positive/rewarding methods.
7. I attend seminars, classes, learning camps and talk to other trainers (who use reward based systems) as often as I can.

What measures have you taken to prevent the loss of your dog?

1. Nothing really. If he wants to leave home, then who am I to stop him?
2. Putting a rabies tag on the collar.
3. Having an engraved tag with my name, address and cell phone on the collar.
4. Having #3, plus a tattoo and/or microchip with current owner information registered.
5. Add to #4 that I've trained the dog to come when called, and stay near me, I have a fenced area for my dog to get exercise in outside, and I use a leash to protect my dog from harm and only allow my dog off leash where it is safe and legal or fully fenced and legal.
6. Add to #5 that my dog is safely contained at home when I'm gone, and not allowed out of my sight when I'm with him. I know the whereabouts of my dog at all times.

What would you do if your dog suddenly was lost or went missing?

1. I'd get a new dog.
2. I'd wait for someone to call my number on his ID tag.
3. I'd check the shelter, put an ad in the paper, put up reward posters, check internet websites that are used for lost dog postings and go door-to-door.
4. Add to #3 that I would do this in neighboring counties, too.

What do you do with your dog when you take him in the vehicle with you?

1. He rides in the back of the pickup truck because he likes it there.
2. I let him roam loose in the vehicle. He likes to bounce around the back seat or sit on my lap with his head out the window.
3. The dog(s) ride in the back. They know that's their seat. They can walk around anywhere as long as they stay in the back seat.
4. I put my dog in a seat belt, but I think its only designed to keep my dog from jumping around, not keep him from flying through the air and colliding with whatever is in front of him during an accident, because there are plastic or weak snaps that would break if I had a collision.
5. I have one of those fence separators, so the dog stays in the back.
6. I put my dog in a crate which is anchored inside the vehicle, for safety.
7. I strap my dog into a seatbelt with a crash-test rated dog seat belt restraint system. I seat the dog in the back, where an air bag won't hurt him on impact, or I remember to turn off the front passenger seat air bag.

Do you know how many dogs are dying in shelters each year in the United States?

1. Thousands
2. Millions
3. Several Million
4. Around 7 or 8 Million

What do you think is the main cause of so many dogs having to be killed?

1. Not enough people are adopting dogs
2. Too many "accidental" breedings, and/or puppy mill production and/or "designer" dogs (when two purebred dogs are combined to create a new "designer" breed.)
3. Not enough people are spaying and neutering their dogs because I know that when people do spay and neuter, it has been proven to reduce the population in shelters.
4. Not enough people are committed to keeping the dog for its whole life.
5. People don't know how to cope with dog behavior and don't think they have the time or energy to try to redirect the dog to more acceptable behaviors through simple reward based training methods so they give up the dog to the shelter.

How can we help stop this needless killing of dogs?

1. Everyone in America adopt two extra dogs per year.
2. Encourage and support spay/neuter education like TV advertisements, billboards and on-line, printed and in-person education of the people who adopt dogs.
3. Encourage and support shelters that spay or neuter BEFORE the dog is adopted out.
4. Discourage "backyard breeders" from keeping their dogs intact to "make money" on the puppies.
5. Educate people about responsible pet parenting (Socialize, Train, Neuter, and Contain) and teach them how to deal with problem behaviors, instead of throwing the dog away.
6. All of the above, ok, well maybe not #1

If no one neutered their dogs and they had irresponsible owners, how many unwanted dogs can one dog (and its generations of offspring) bring into the world in a five year period?

1. Dozens
2. Hundreds
3. Thousands

What is the best thing you can do to prevent your dog from injuring a person?

1. Keep them locked up and never let them leave the house or yard
2. Use a regular and secure fence for your yard that keeps kids from running through, unlike an invisible fence that lets kids and meter readers come into your dog's territory without them realizing it
3. Provide a balanced and nutritious diet that doesn't have added sugars and by-products and fillers which could cause behavior issues and health problems which could make the dog more prone to bite because he doesn't feel good.
4. Take your new puppy out to as many places as possible and help him learn that he doesn't need to fear people, kids, other animals, car rides, walks in the park, stores that allow dogs, etc.
5. Continue to use positive association and socialization throughout your dog's life so he is much less likely to be afraid which could result in the dog biting someone to get away or to get them away.
6. Add to #3 & #4: desensitize my dog to being touched all over, including gentle ear, fur and tail tugs to simulate what a child might do if I fail to supervise their interactions with my dog.
7. Add to 3, 4, & 5: don't get a puppy younger than 8 weeks old so his litter mates can teach him bite inhibition. I also teach my dog that teeth are not allowed to touch skin in a hurtful way and that tug-o-war games can be played only if the safety rules are followed (toy is mine, I start and end the game, if teeth touch my skin game ends.)

How can you best avoid a lawsuit from your dog hurting someone on your property?

1. Be sure the pen around him in the yard is secure and kids can't poke their fingers in or tease him
2. Keep the dog in the house with me and supervise him closely when he's outside in the fenced yard. Investigate any barking or vocalizations the dog makes.
3. Provide positive or neutral socialization to many different people both in the house and out in public to be sure the dog understands the difference between a neighbor or family member coming for an unannounced visit and a criminal trying to break in. Teach the dog that kids are not to be chased and that they can be unpredictable, so moving away from them and toward you will cause you to reward the dog and settle the children.
4. In addition to #2 and #3 give the dog a place in which to escape where he won't be bothered by kids or any people he doesn't want to interact with. Teach any visitors to your home, especially children, how to properly and safely interact with the dog and when to leave him alone.
5. In addition to 2, 3, & 4 have the dog checked yearly, or more often if needed, to be sure the dog is healthy and not suffering from any ailment which might make him less tolerant than usual.

How often does your dog visit the veterinarian?

If your dog were suddenly sick or in need of extensive life-extending measures, how much would you spend to treat your dog?

1. I'm sure the dog will be fine, he saw the vet a few years ago and he was ok then.
2. My budget is tight and I can't afford to spend much on the health care of the dog. I may have to have the dog euthanized if it would be too costly.
3. I would exhaust my limited budget and then look for grants and money from organizations that offer funding for this type of thing.

4. In addition to #3, I would take out a loan, re-mortgage my house (or move to a smaller one), beg from relatives and friends and sell my belongings if I had to in order to provide the care my dog needed to survive.

What is your dog's favorite plaything?

1. I have no idea. I have seen him play with sticks, butterflies and falling leaves in the yard though.
2. He has toys all over the house and yard, but doesn't really play with them
3. My dog loves his treat filled kong or other filled toy that keeps him busy for hours.
4. His "brother or sister" animal that lives with him. They love to play together.
5. Anything I have that I can make "come alive" for a fun game of chase, fetch or tug

When you take your dog out in public, what items do you always carry with you?

1. Carry with me?
2. I always have clean-up baggies and I will use them to clean up my own dog's waste
3. In addition to #2, I always carry treats or a favorite toy in case a training opportunity presents itself
4. In addition to #2 and #3, I will often clean-up after other irresponsible dog owners as well because I know that piles left in public cause people to dislike dogs having access to those public places.

When you stay in a motel with your dog, what items do you bring with you?

1. I don't take my dog to a hotel with me
2. His food bowls and food
3. A crate for my dog to stay in if I have to leave him in the room. Add a point if you include some chew toys or kongs and if you leave the hotel a number where you can be reached if your dog is barking or stressed.
4. In addition to #2, blankets to put on the floor and over the bed to prevent a lot of hair from being left behind and to help him adjust to this new space because the blankets have the scent of me and of home on them even though they were washed right before the trip.
5. I only take my dog with me to a hotel if I know I can arrange my schedule so that he does not have to be in the room alone where he might bark or get stressed. However, I bring along a crate where he can rest and feel safe because it's familiar to him. I also bring the items in #2, #3 and #4.
6. Add an extra point to your score above if you bring any or all of the following items: clean up supplies (paper towels, enzyme spray, etc.), clicker and treats so you can work on quiet games/behaviors to keep your dog occupied in the room, a roller vac to pick up excess dog hair if your dog sheds a lot, alternate plans in case the hotel you reserved does not work out for some reason, silencer or rubber bands to wrap around your dog's collar tags so they don't jingle as you walk down the hall or play in the room.

If you found your answers in the first few choices, you could likely improve your knowledge or responsibility in those areas. Your dog will be happier and you will feel better.

If your answers tended to be in the middle of the choices, you might be doing OK, or you might want to increase your education about why the higher numbered answers could be better for your dog.

If your answers were the higher numbered choices, way to go! You have a very lucky dog! Your responsibility can be an example for others who are not as aware of the above situations as you.