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FOR THE FRIDGE



When Considering a Pet for Your Family

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Children with ADHD or other psychosocial challenges can benefit greatly from having a companion animal in the home. But before your family adopts or purchases a pet, consider this:

- **The whole family must make a commitment to “share the care.”** Children are impulsive, forgetful, and unreliable by nature. Don’t expect your child to take over the entire responsibility of caring for a pet.
- **Parental supervision is the key to keeping both your child and the animal safe.** Feeding, cleaning, taking an animal for walks and all other interactions must be guided and supervised by responsible adults who continually remind the child of how to behave and conduct himself.
- **Have realistic expectations of the animal and also of your child.** Animals are not “magic vitamin pills”—they are living beings who have good days and bad, just like people. Pet stewardship is a long-term commitment and there will be work, expenses, challenges, and a few difficult days along with all of the positive things that come from human/animal interaction.

Ten steps to choosing a pet

- Research different species of pets and get educated by responsible sources that can point out the positive traits and challenges each type of pet has.
- Adoption from a humane society is a great way to go. Be careful of pet shops; not all make a commitment to selling healthy animals.
- Find others who keep the kind of animal you are thinking of. How did it work out for them? Ask questions.
- Consider your lifestyle, living situation, and daily schedule. How much time is your family prepared to spend with the animal each

day? You may be too busy to commit to a dog, but could manage a guinea pig just fine.

- All pets cost money to keep. Make a budget and examine ahead of time how much you are willing to invest into animal care.
- All animals are living beings. They may have behavioral, health, or other needs that may challenge you. Are you willing to accept these problems?
- All pets have a limited lifespan—be prepared. Some small pets like mice will only live for a few short years.
- Avoid giving animals as a gift on holidays or birthdays. Give a brush, leash, or other prop instead. Have the whole family select and get the actual animal later.
- Find out ahead of time if anyone is allergic to the specific kind of animal you are thinking of getting.
- Even a small pet deserves respect. If things don’t work out, animals can’t just be discarded and it may not be easy to find a new home for the animal. 🐾

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