



If You're Planning on Getting a Pet ...

Pets are a great way of teaching children about responsibility.

But remember that you need to put some serious thought into your decision. Differences of opinion about what Johnny wants in a pet, and what Susie desires, can lead to Fido or Tabby ending up in a shelter – and that is a real shame because the U.S. Humane Society estimates that 6 to 8 million dogs and cats enter shelters each year.

“What kind of pet is best for you? Border collies and Rottweilers are two of the smartest breeds,” says Irvin Cannon, retired police officer and dog lover. “But they tend to have other traits, too, which are just as important to consider when choosing what dog best suits your lifestyle. Remember – dogs are as individual as people. A dog’s breed, or breed mix, is no guarantee that it will have certain traits.”

“That being said,” Cannon adds, “border collies tend to need lots of room to run and require lots of attention. In other words, they’re high maintenance. If you can’t spend a lot of active time with them, they’ll be unhappy and you’ll have problems.

“Rottweilers are fast learners and loveable family animals, but they also tend to have bold personalities associated with pack leaders,” Cannon says. “If you don’t think you can assert your authority, or if you have young or shy children, you might want to consider a more submissive breed. Dominant dogs that are allowed to bully their family members can become dangerously aggressive.”

Other Advice

Here are some additional tips about breeds and shelters:

- ❖ Among other dog breeds known for intelligence: Shetland sheepdogs, golden retrievers, Labrador retrievers, poodles, Australian cattle dogs, Papillons, and Doberman pinschers.

- ❖ Bulldogs, beagles and Basset hounds all start with “B” but they get much lower grades for smarts.



- ❖ According to Animal Planet, three of the 10 most intelligent cats are Siamese, Oriental, and Balinese.

- ❖ It’s a myth that mutts have fewer health issues than purebred dogs. Because some breeds have tendencies toward problems such as hip dysplasia (a problem with the

joint’s bone structure), remember, these are genetic issues that are *inherited*. So if your mixed-breed includes some German shepherd, it may also have hip dysplasia. “It all depends on the mix of breeds and which breed strain is dominant,” Cannon says.

- ❖ If you’re in the market for a purebred dog or cat, you have a 25% chance of finding one – although maybe not the breed you want – at a shelter. If your heart is set on a specific breed, check your area for a rescue group specializing in that breed.

- ❖ Consider adopting from a shelter. There is certainly nothing wrong with getting a pet from a reputable breeder, but the U.S. Humane Society reminds prospective pet owners that roughly 3 to 4 million dogs and cats are euthanized each year. This number has increased due to the recession, as pet owners seek to cut expenses due to extended joblessness. “While the majority of the public is in favor of adopting pets from shelters, very few, usually about 20%, actually do,” states Inga Fricke, director of sheltering issues for the U.S. Humane Society. “This figure has recently gone up slightly to the mid-20s.” ■

Additional source: News and Experts. Irvin Cannon is author of the book, “For the Love of Dog Tales” (www.fortheloveofdogtales.com).

ACTIVITY PLANNER

Celebrate the Olympics With these Games

You can get a jump-start on all the hoopla that will be associated with this summer's Olympic Games in London – and teach your kids about different cultures at the same time – by trying these arts-and-crafts projects with your children:

Olympic Torch Craft

You will need: recycled tube from gift

wrap; paint and brush; and yellow and orange tissue paper.

Instructions: Paint the cardboard tube. Let dry. Decorate with painted swirls. Cut a 10-inch square out of the yellow and orange tissue paper. Push the paper into the top of the tube to resemble a flame, while the tube itself will look like a torch!

Paper Plate Olympic Rings

You will need: 5 small paper plates; blue, black, green, yellow, and red markers; glue.



Instructions: Carefully cut out the center of the paper plates. Color each plate in a different color and leave dry. Lay out the rings in the Olympic design and glue together. (Examine a picture of the Olympic rings if you're not sure what the design looks like.) If your kids really get into this activity, take 5 larger paper plates, duplicate the coloring and gluing procedure, and make more rings. Heck, decorate an entire wall in your home with them if you like! ■

Sources: Activity Village, www.freekidscrafts.com.

STUDY BUDDY

Letter Learning

Learning the letters of the alphabet, like all early learning, is best done in the context of what is meaningful to young children. Many children first learn the initial letter of their own name, which has a great deal of meaning and importance to them. For the child who loves Jell-O, J may be an important letter, while the



child who knows that Daddy works at a Wal-Mart store, may begin to notice the letter W.

At home or while you're out and about together, point out letters and words that are likely to be of special interest to your child. Try simple activities such as reading logos of favorite foods and stores, identifying street signs, writing grocery lists together, and playing with magnetic letters on the refrigerator door while singing the alphabet song. Remember, children learn through play! ■

Source: Aggie Care *Naptime News*.

SNACK SMART

Try Raisin Biscuits!

You'll need: 1 c. raisins, 1 c. brown sugar, 1 c. chopped nuts, canned biscuits, stick of butter at room temperature, cinnamon to taste.

Instructions: Combine raisins, brown sugar, and nuts. Stretch canned biscuits to 4-inch circles. Butter generously. Press raisin mixture into biscuits. Sprinkle with cinnamon. Bake 8 minutes at 450 degrees. ■

Source: www.cooks.com.

BEEHAVIOR MATTERS

Dealing With Dishonesty

How does a parent begin leading a dishonest child toward a path of honest behavior? The truth is, both lying and stealing are difficult habits to change because they are so rewarding to the liar or thief. Children want to know:

- What will they gain by being honest?
- Will they receive as much attention by being honest as they did by being dishonest?
- Will they have great "stuff" if they don't steal?

Breaking habits is not a simple task. There is no simple solution, no magic wand. This kind of change requires parents to have the courage and determination to "follow through."

Changing the Stakes

While most people have occasionally hedged the truth or can remember a minor theft, it is vital that parents teach children that lying and stealing will not be tolerated. Parents must summon the courage to maintain an honest environment, confront dishonesty openly, and hold the child accountable for his/her behavior.

Accountability

Accountability means that each time the dishonest child says something, the parent will check up to see if the truth was told. If the parent does not have the time or energy to do this, the child must prove that he/she is telling the truth. If this cannot be done, then the adult must assume it is a lie.

Children often assume that parents are obligated to prove a lie or theft before applying consequences. They need to know this isn't the case. If someone habitually lies or steals the tables are turned. Now, it is the *liar* or *thief's* responsibility to prove their honesty.

Correction

Provide the child with opportunities to be truthful, and then reward him/her for being honest. Over time, this process becomes a way for a child to reestablish trust. Each check becomes an opportunity to demonstrate honesty, rather than an occasion to catch the child being dishonest. ■

Source: Pat Miller, a registered occupational therapist.

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