

# YOUR KIDS WANT A PET? GREAT! BUT...

“Mom, can we get a dog?  
Pleeease?”



**HAVING A PET CAN BE A REWARDING EXPERIENCE FOR KIDS. IT TEACHES THEM RESPONSIBILITY AND EMPATHY. HOWEVER, YOU NEED TO SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS BEFORE BRINGING A NEW PET INTO YOUR HOME.**

“Mom, can we get a dog? Pleeease?” You’re looking at the same adorable puppy in the window, and you can’t help but think, “Why not?” Maybe you had pets growing up, maybe you always wanted one, or maybe it just seems like the thing to do. On the other hand, you might not be so enthusiastic, but you’re considering it because you think it might be good for your kids. Whether furry, feathered, or scaly, having a pet can be fantastic for families.

## **A pet is a serious commitment**

Your child’s excitement about having a pet may likely wane after it has been in the house for a few weeks—or even a few days. Make sure your child understands that having a pet is a long-term commitment. You’re bringing a living creature into your family, and you need to be prepared to work together to take care of it (even when it’s not fun).

## **Who’s doing what?**

Pets are a great way to teach your kids responsibility. Feeding, walking, cleaning—animals have needs to be met, so these are chores that really matter. Make it clear that you’re not going to do them all yourself when your child doesn’t feel like it. As a family, you can designate who is going to do which pet-related chore. If you’re going to take turns, talk about how the rotation will work. Be prepared to insist that those responsibilities are met.

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### Safety first

Before bringing a new animal home, you'll want to ensure your home can provide a safe environment—both for the animal and the people. Talk with your child as you prepare your home for your new pet. Maybe you don't have a fence, so everyone needs to understand the dog has to be leashed when outside. Maybe you have a baby that needs to be kept away from the cat. Establish rules for keeping the pet in—or out of—certain spaces.

### Get excited together

Pets can offer emotional support and create an opportunity for children to develop empathy. Make your child a part of the process as you choose your pet, prepare for it, name it, and bond with it. Research the species of your chosen pet together and learn about its dietary, environmental, social, and other needs.

### Counting the cost

Owning a pet costs money. Sometimes, a lot of money. Annual expenses that include food, treats, training, and vet visits can sometimes amount to more than you were expecting. Contact me so we can make sure you are accounting for these new expenses before you bring Fido home.

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