

How to Evaluate Your Reasons for Wanting a Dog

Dogs are a major commitment, and there are many good reasons for wanting one. Bringing a dog into your home requires thoughtful consideration of both your reasons for wanting to own a dog and your ability to provide a good home for one. To understand if you are ready for a dog, write down all of the reasons you want a dog, and carefully evaluate your lifestyle and home to see if you can care for the dog appropriately. When you have done this, compare your reasons and gain some real-life experience caring for dogs so that you can make an informed decision.



Method 1

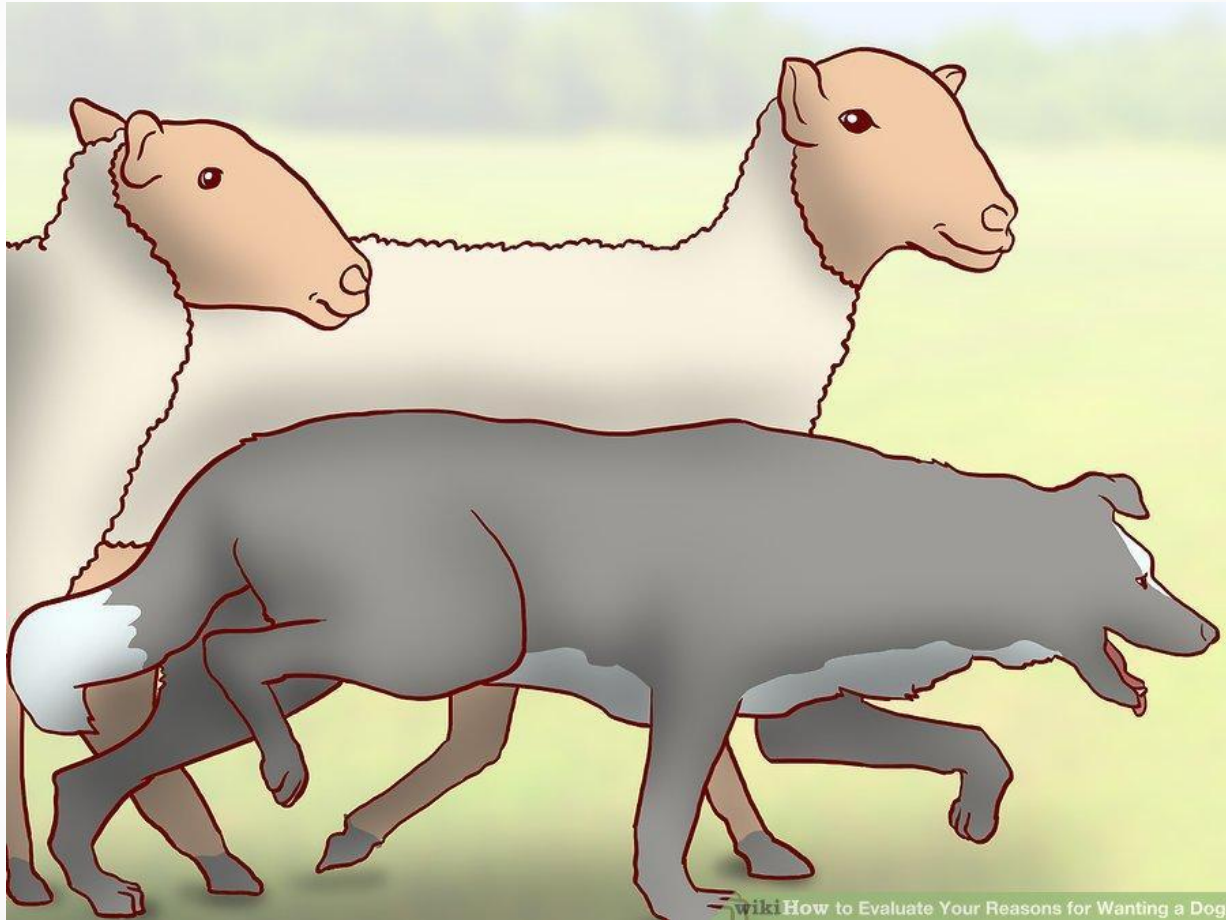
**Deciding Why You
Want a Dog**

1. Consider if you want a dog for companionship.



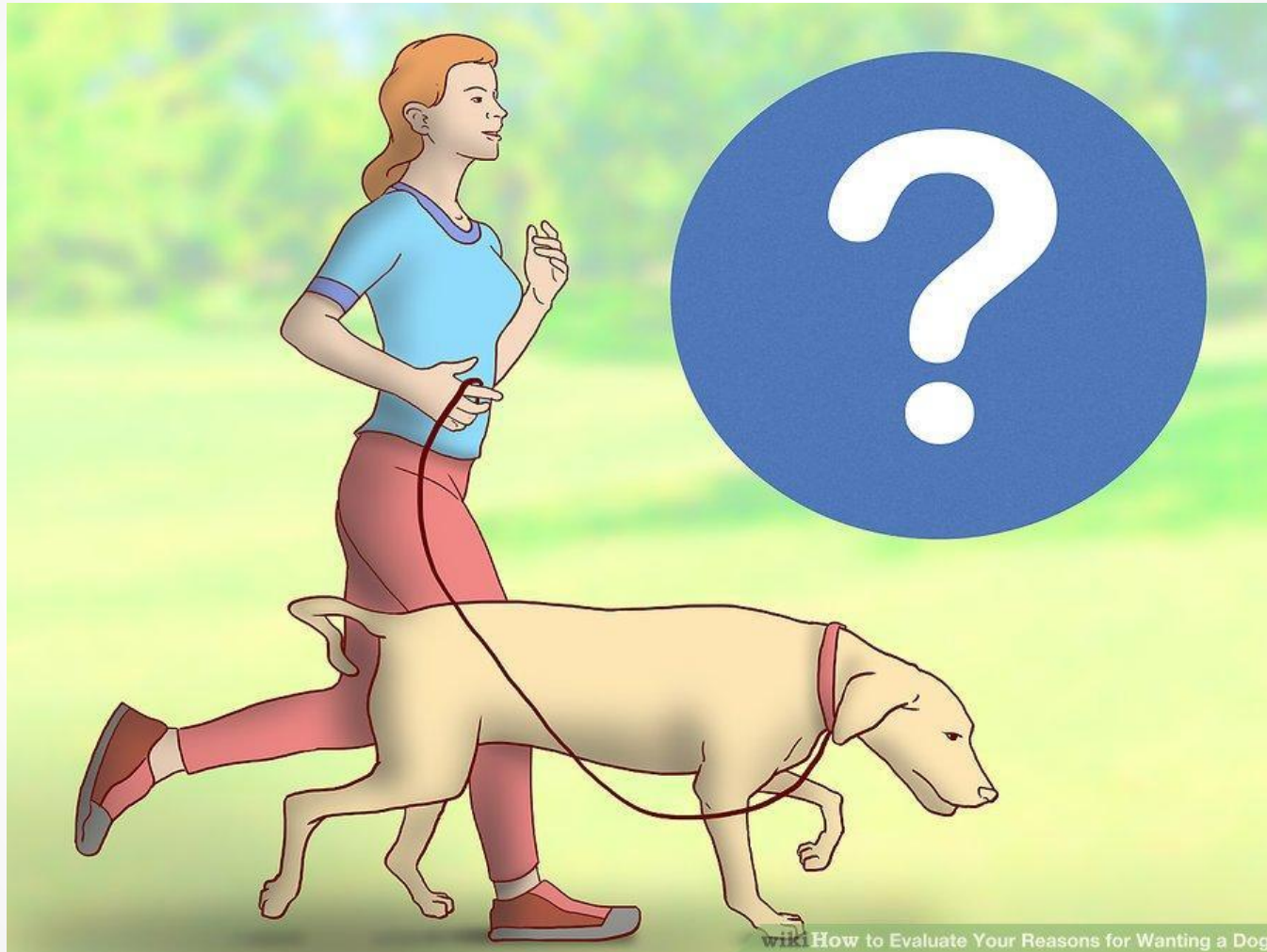
Dogs can be great companions for adults, children, and other animals, but some dogs may not be as social as others. Think about how a dog might fit into your life and what type of companion you might want. Dogs can be very cuddly, but keep in mind that not all dogs may love to snuggle. If you are retired, work from home, or live by yourself, a dog can provide excitement and activity. Remember that a dog needs companionship too. If you work long hours, travel frequently, or are otherwise unable to care for the dog during the day, you may not want to adopt a dog.

2. Determine if you want a working dog



Think about whether or not you need a dog to perform certain tasks or to assist around the home. Dogs can provide therapeutic aid, round up livestock, or guard the home. If you think that a dog can help you, you may want to consider whether or not adopting a work dog is right for you. If you have livestock, you may want a guard dog to protect the animals from predators. Some dogs, such as Australian Cattle Dogs or Border Collies, can be trained to herd animals as well. Dogs can be used to guard your home. Just having a dog in the house is enough to scare away potential intruders. If you are looking for a guide or therapy dog, you may be limited to certain breeds, such as a Labrador Retriever, German Shepherd, or Golden Retriever. These dogs will require training to effectively work and care for you.

3. Think about whether you want a dog to exercise with



Dogs require plenty of exercise, and they can help keep you active. You might want a dog to help keep you active or to join you during outdoor activities. Some great activities you can do with dogs include:

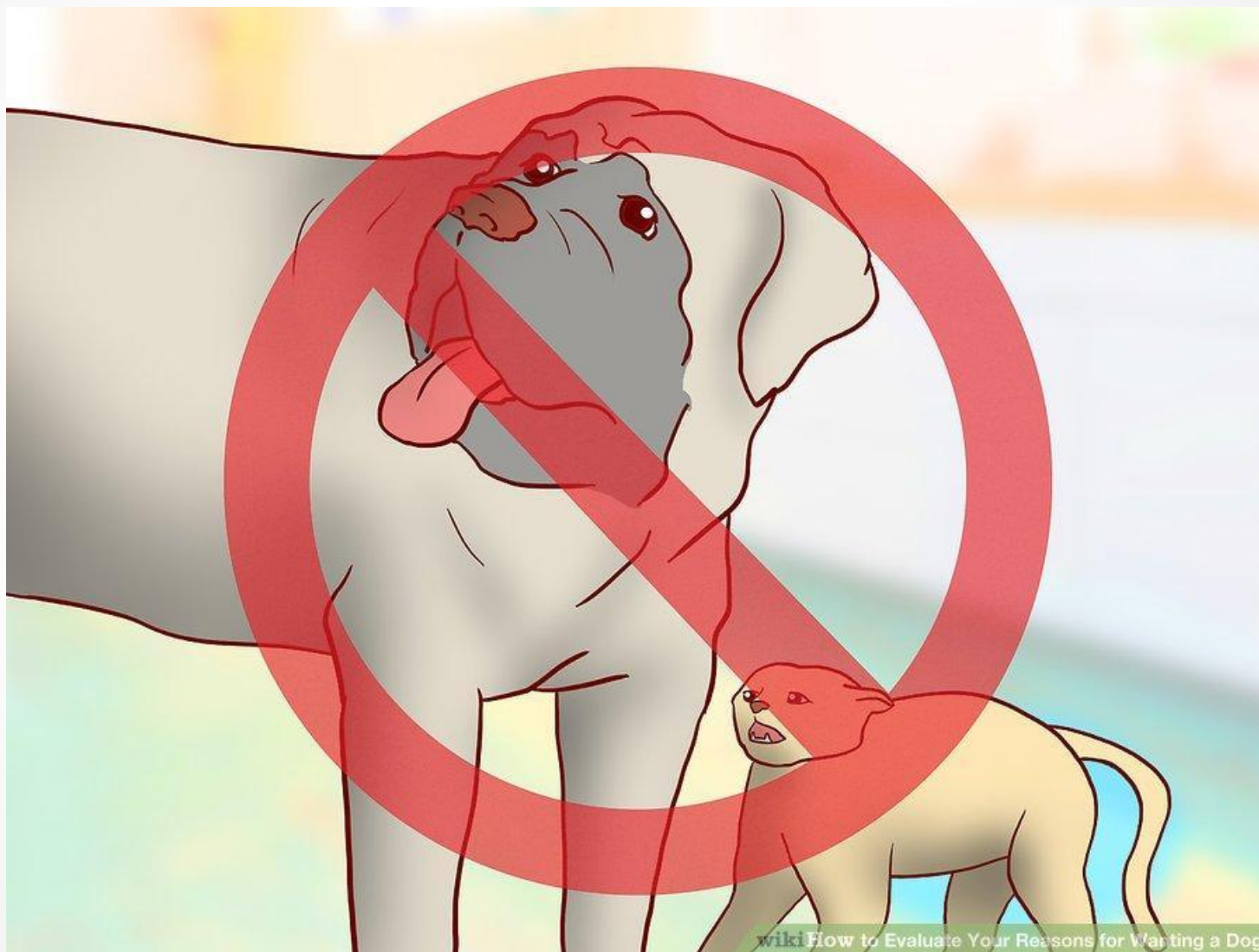
- Running
- Hiking
- Swimming
- Playing games like tug-of-war or fetch

4. Establish whether or not you want a dog for your children



If you have children, you can use the dog to help teach them about responsibility. Your children may learn about caring for an animal as they feed, wash, and train the dog. Do not adopt a dog thinking that it will stop fighting or resolve relationship problems in a tense situation. A dog may only add stress to the situation.

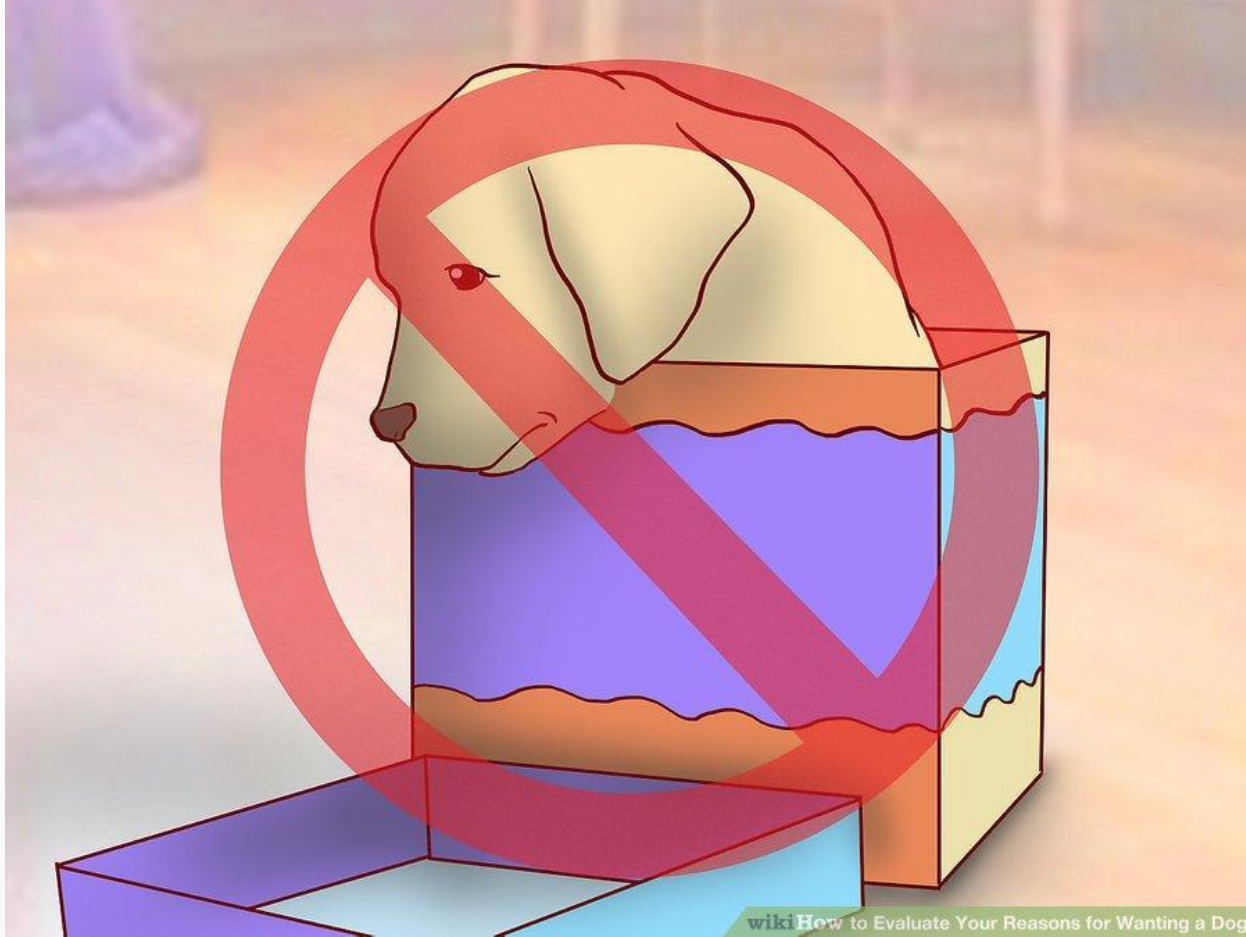
5. Evaluate if a dog might be a good fit for other pets



If you have other pets already, a new dog in the house may be a good addition, giving them a lifelong companion that they can play with when the humans are away. That said, some cats and dogs may not be comfortable with a new animal in the house. Consider how your current pets might feel about having a new dog in the house. Many people will adopt a dog to provide an older dog with companionship. This is a good idea if you want to keep the older dog alert and active. If your current pet has demonstrated aggression towards dogs in the past, adopting a dog as a companion may not be a good idea. If your current dog has a high prey drive, you may not want to adopt a smaller dog.



6. Avoid giving dogs as gifts



It is generally not a good idea to give a dog as a gift to someone unless you have discussed with them beforehand their willingness and ability to care for the dog. While you might think it is a great gift, remember that dogs can be expensive and they require quite a bit of time and energy. The recipient may not want a dog, and giving them an unwanted pet puts them in a difficult decision if they cannot appropriately care for one.



7. Be wary of adopting a dog to make a statement



Dogs are living creatures, and you should not buy a dog to impress or scare other people. Furthermore, be cautious when adopting a purebred dog. While some purebred dogs are often chosen for their physical appearance, these dogs may be severely inbred, leading to respiratory and hip problems. While some small dogs may be comfortable being carried in a purse, others might be anxious or scared by the experience. Certain breeds such as pit bulls or rottweilers are often used to intimidate or scare people. While these dogs are effective guard dogs, they should not be trained to be aggressive or to attack people.

Method 2

Gauging
Your Ability to
Own a Dog

1. Analyze your lifestyle



Whether or not you have children, how much you exercise, and how often you're home can help determine whether or not a dog is right for you. Think about your lifestyle, and consider all of the ways that a new dog will fit into that lifestyle. If you like to go out on weekends or travel frequently, a dog may not be right for you. Remember that you will have to ensure that the dog is taken care of while you are out of the house. If you have young children under the age of six, you may want to wait a few years before getting a dog, as many dogs may not do well around small children. If you already own one pet, consider how that pet acts around other animals and dogs. Will your pet appreciate a new friend? Or will they become territorial?



2. Assess your living space



When you adopt a dog, your home becomes their home too. Some dogs do well in apartments while others need homes with fenced-in yards. Some might be hardy enough to live outdoors while some can only survive indoors. Decide how much space the dog would have to roam, whether or not they'd have a yard, and where you would store a dog crate, food, beds, and toys. If you are renting, you will have to check your lease to make sure that dogs are permitted on the property. There may be size and breed restrictions as well.

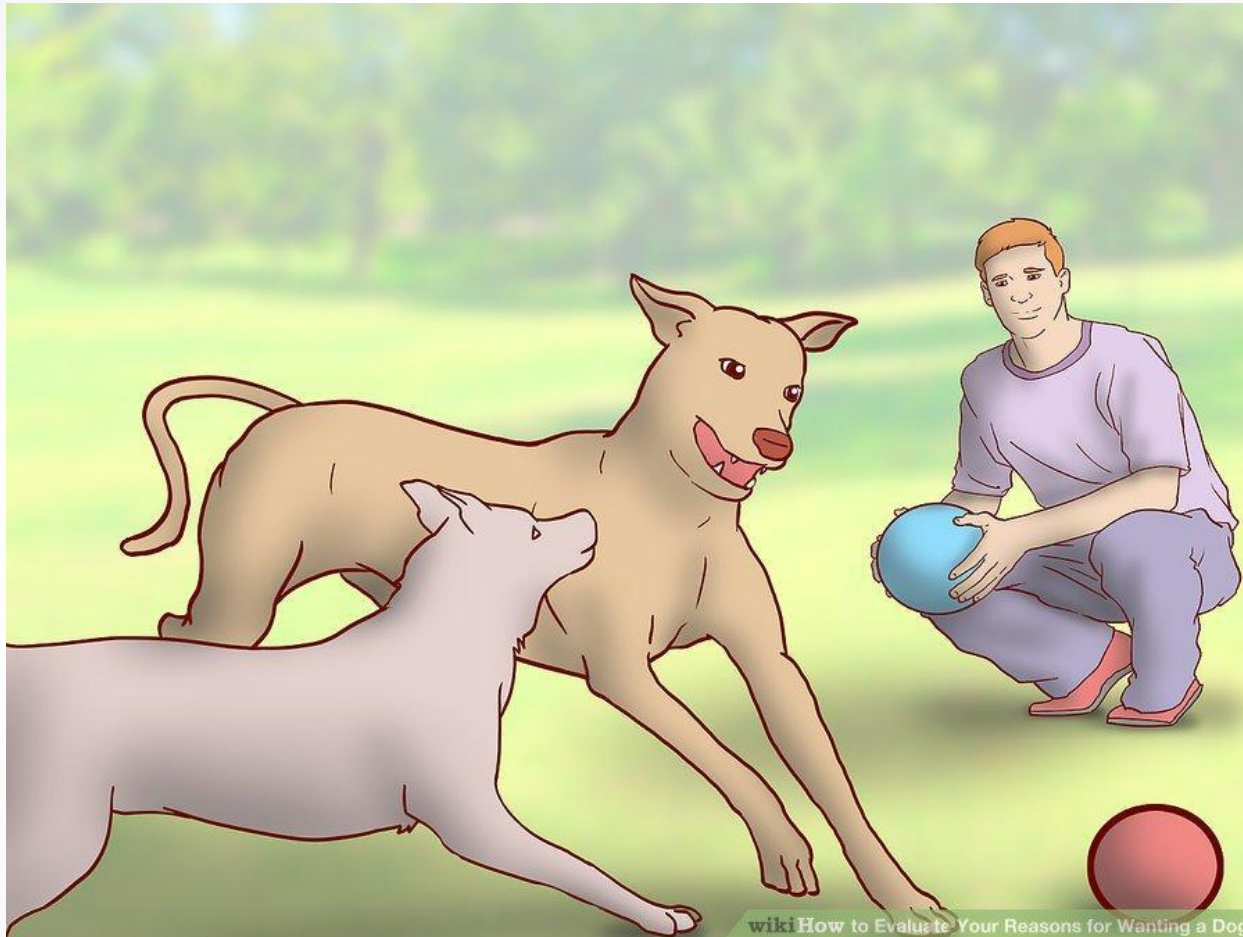
3. Factor in the cost of a dog



Dogs are expensive. A dog can easily cost over \$1000 to care for in the first year and \$500 every year after. Make sure you can afford a dog before you bring one into your home. Things you may have to pay for include:

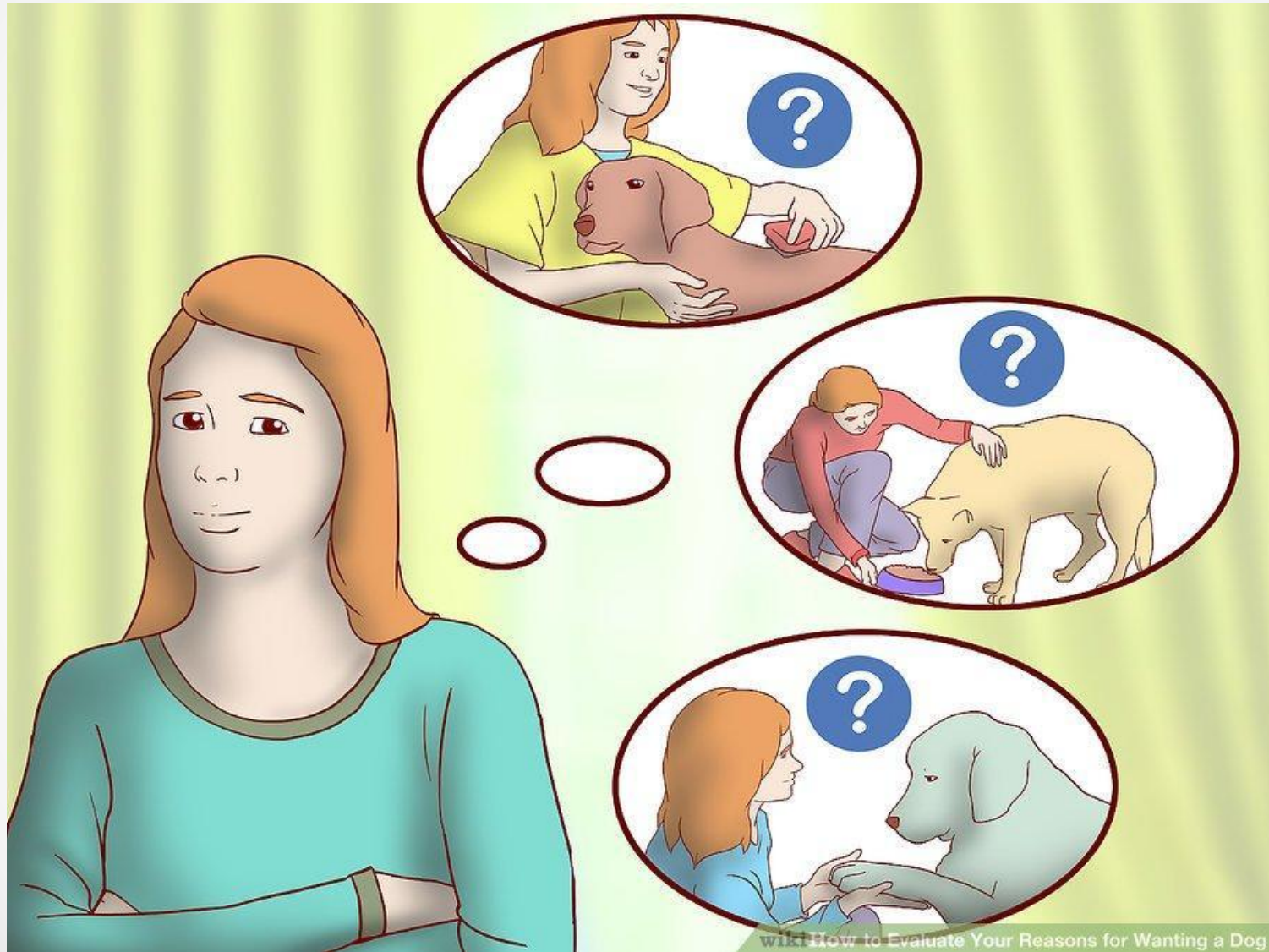
- Food
- Water bowl
- Leash
- Collar
- Microchipping
- Toys
- Treats
- Spaying or neutering
- Vet visits
- Emergency treatment
- Medication
- Dog-sitter or boarding

4. Look over your schedule



Dogs need to socialize with people and other animals. Not enough activity means that they will become bored, destructive, or anxious. Make sure that you will have enough time to spend with your dog each day, not just to take care of basic necessities like walks and feedings but also to play, cuddle, and socialize with your pet. If you work long days, remember that the dog would be alone at your house. Dogs need regular stimulation, such as walks, as well as social activities and toilet breaks outside. If the dog is a puppy or incontinent senior, you may need to hire a dog sitter or walker who will visit them during the day.

5. Determine if you can fulfill their needs



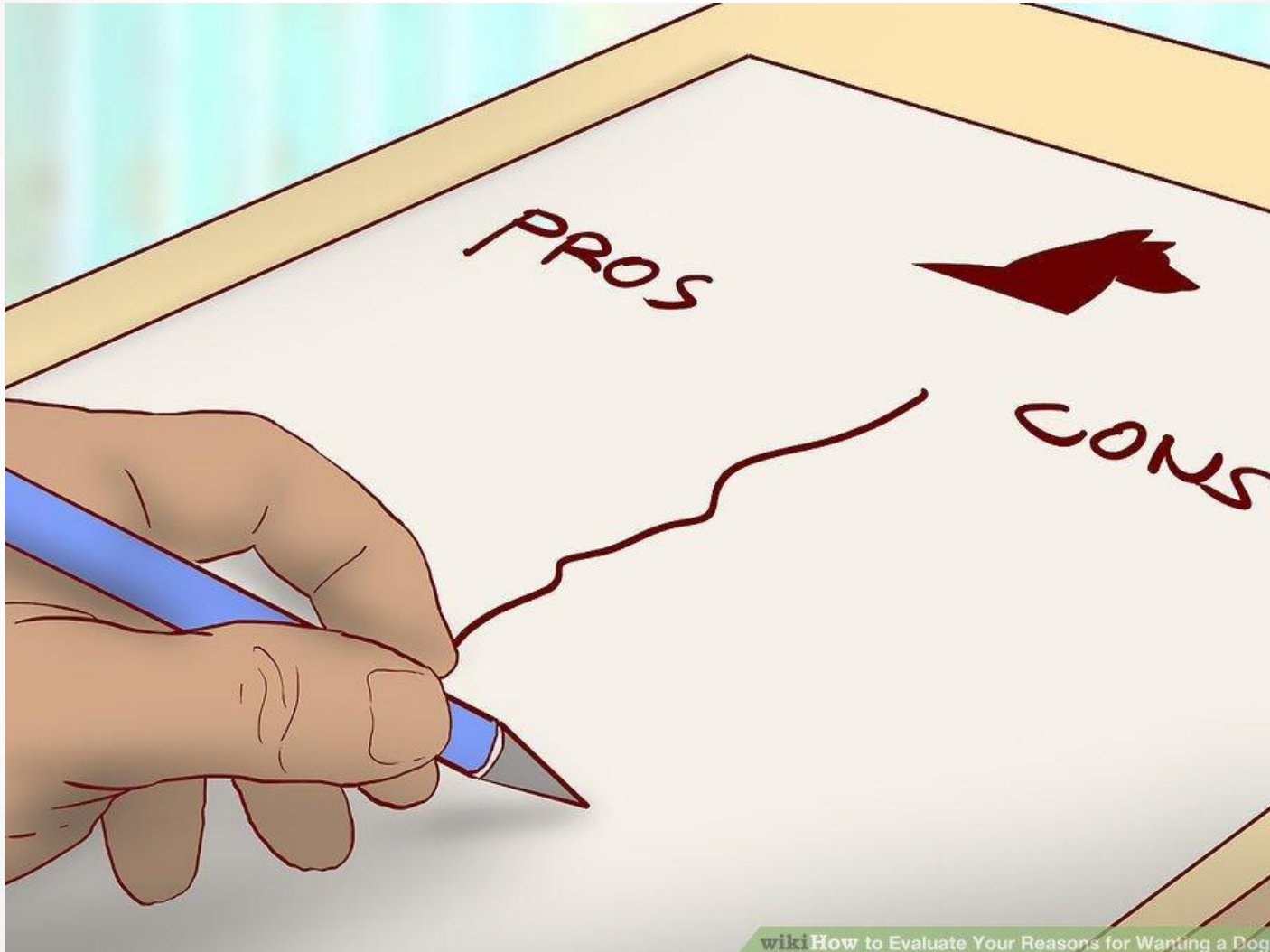
To understand how strong your desire or reasons are for a dog, test your commitment to caring for one. Determine if you are capable and willing to fulfill all of their needs, even when you are feeling tired, sick, or lazy. You can ask yourself:

- Am I committed to training the dog?
- Will I be available to feed and walk the dog every day, rain or shine?
- Do I mind cleaning up dog poop while housetraining the dog?
- Do I own valuable items that might be destroyed by the dog?
- Do I mind dog hair on my rugs, furniture, and clothing?
- Will I bathe the dog when needed?
- Am I able to spend time with the dog every day? Am I willing to skip social events or vacations to care for the dog?

Method 5

**Determining
if a Dog is
Right for You**

1. Create a pros and cons list



Create a list with two columns. Under one column, write down all of the benefits and good reasons to own a dog. Under the other column, write down all of the negative consequences and restraints of owning a dog. If the cons outweigh the pros, a dog may not be right for you.

2. Ask your friends and family for their opinions



Talking to another person can be a great way to understand if your reasons are good enough for adopting a dog. Your friends and family will understand your living situation and lifestyle, and they can help you understand whether adopting a dog is a good idea or not. They may even provide reasons that you did not consider before.

3. Talk to a rescue organization



If you're still uncertain about your reasons or ability to own a dog, contact a local rescue organization. This might be one that you are interested in adopting from or one that specializes in a breed that you want. They are experienced with dog owners. Tell them your reasons for wanting a dog, and they will be able to tell you if a dog is the right choice for you.

4. Volunteer at a shelter



If you've never owned a dog before, you may be uncertain still about what owning a dog entails. Find your local animal shelter, Humane Society, or Society for the Protection and Care of Animals. Ask them if you can help care for dogs. Not only will this let you interact with potential adoptees, but you will have an opportunity to feed, walk, play, and clean up after dogs.

5. Dog sit for a friend



If you have friends who own dogs, you might ask one of them if you can borrow the dog for a day or two to see how well you fare with owning a dog. Feed the dog, take them outside to eliminate, groom them, and play with them. This will give you a picture of what your daily life with a dog will be like. If you still want a dog, you may be ready to own one after all.

6. Weigh your reasons for wanting a dog



Once you have both evaluated your arguments for wanting a dog and your ability to own a dog, you should compare the two together. Ideally, you should not adopt a dog unless you are completely committed and capable of caring for a dog. If you have good reasons to own a dog but you cannot provide them a good home, perhaps you should look into a different type of pet, such as a cat, guinea pig, or reptile. If you're not sure about your reasons but you can provide the dog a good home, you might spend some more time thinking about your commitment of caring for a pet. If your reasons are sound and you can provide a good home, a dog may be the right choice for you. If you have tried volunteering or dogsitting for a while and you still want a pet, your reasons for wanting a dog may be strong enough.



7. Give yourself time to make an informed decision



It can be tempting to adopt a dog on impulse. Perhaps you saw a puppy in a window, or maybe you went to an adoption event "just to see." If you have not seriously considered your reasons for adopting a dog before, give yourself some time before you go through with the adoption. Time will allow you to rationally consider your reasons, and you may be able to arrive at a more sensible conclusion.