



DO YOU HAVE TIME FOR A DOG?...

....if you have a full-time job?

We are often asked if it is possible to adopt a dog from Dogs Trust if the prospective owners work full-time and the dog would have to be left alone all day. The answer is usually no. This is because we do not recommend that a dog should be left alone for longer than four hours at a time.

Why not?

Dogs are social animals and as a general rule, are happiest and content when they are with their family groups. Because many dogs bond strongly to their owners, they can become very insecure and anxious when their owners leave them. They can also become very bored, especially if they are left for long periods of time, and this can lead to all sorts of problems.

Most dogs just need a bit of company and fuss to keep them happy, so leaving them on their own for a long time is not fair on any of them. Certain types and breeds of dogs require more company and/or activity than others and find it even harder and more stressful. Not forgetting of course, that most dogs will need to go to the toilet at least every four hours – if they don't have outdoor access they may be forced to have accidents in the home, or hold on too long, risking health problems.

Even if there is a secure outdoors area where a dog could spend the day, many dogs will become very bored, distressed, noisy and possibly destructive. This is also not an option during very hot or cold periods for many breeds of dog. Your dog is also at risk of being stolen. If he's very noisy you could find yourself very unpopular with the neighbours and even subject to a noise abatement order from your local Environmental Health Office.

The potential problems can be even worse if you are considering taking on a puppy rather than an older dog. Housetraining a puppy needs constant supervision for the process to be successful, so leaving a puppy or young dog for a long period is asking for trouble. Puppies particularly must have human company during the first year so that they can be socialised correctly to avoid future problems of aggression and/or fear (see our factsheet on Socialisation for more information). Setting aside time for some good basic training is also very important; to make sure that your puppy becomes a well-behaved canine citizen. All too often, puppies whose owners have not taken the time to do these things end up being abandoned as young adults in our Rehoming Centres because their owners cannot cope with them any longer.

Two dogs for company?

If you are lucky enough to find two dogs who are very close, then these dogs may be less distressed at being left without human company. However, you will still have to ensure that they do not become bored and make sure that they are able to get out for 'toilet breaks'. In many cases it makes no difference if your dog has the company of another dog, as it is you, the owner that he misses – and you may end up with two very unhappy dogs instead of one!

Is there anything you can do?

There are some exceptions where Rehoming Centres may consider rehoming an older dog (or dogs) to a family where owners are out all day. This may be when the owners are prepared to employ a dog walker to walk the dog and give him/her some company during the day, if they have relatives locally who will be able to dog-sit, or when one of the owners is able to take the dog to work.

Some people who are out at work all day will employ a dog walker. Although Dogs Trust does not provide recommendations, the National Association of Registered Petsitters may have members in your area (telephone 0870 3500543). They offer different levels of service and it may be that a good long walk in the middle of the day may be enough to make the situation more bearable for a dog. This, coupled with things to make him work and keep him occupied during the day such as giving him stuffed 'Kongs', or hiding his dried food around the house so that he has search to find it, will make a big difference to his quality of life when you're not there. You can find more ideas to combat boredom in our factsheet - Beating Boredom.

So perhaps a dog is not for you – what are the alternatives?

If your lifestyle or circumstances just aren't right to give a dog a home at the moment, then how can you still get some of the benefits of doggy ownership? There are several ways:

- Volunteer dog walking at your local Rehoming Centre. If you want close contact with dogs, but can't have one then this may be the best option for you. You must be at least 16 years old to help out with walking dogs and must be available to do this on a regular basis. Please contact your nearest Dogs Trust Rehoming Centre for more information. Our website has contact details for our centres: www.dogstrust.org.uk
- Sponsoring a dog. If you like the idea of having a doggy friend without all the responsibilities that come with it, why not join the Sponsor a Dog Scheme. Certain dogs will never be rehomed because of behavioural, medical or age related problems. Because we never destroy a healthy dog, these dogs will spend the rest of their days in the care of our Rehoming Centres. Sponsoring your chosen dog gives you the opportunity of having regular updates, visiting and perhaps taking them for walks. By paying a nominal amount each week, you know that a special dog in our care has the home comforts provided by your kindness. Your donation will also help other dogs in our care. Please contact us on 020 7837 0006 and we will be delighted to tell you more.
- You could also volunteer to help those who aren't capable of taking out their dogs as much as they'd like. Enquire at your local volunteer bureau or Age Concern.

Please consider whether your lifestyle is suitable for owning a dog or puppy. If you are out at work all day and can't make provisions for his mental and physical welfare during this time, perhaps owning a dog isn't the best option for you or him until your circumstances change. If you are considering adopting a dog from Dogs Trust, please contact your nearest Rehoming Centre directly for more information and advice. Visit our website at www.dogstrust.org.uk or call us on 020 7837 0006 for more information.

For more information about Dogs Trust, to become a member, sponsor a long-term resident or help us in our campaigns please call 020 7837 0006 or write to:

Dogs Trust, 17 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7RQ.

www.dogstrust.org.uk

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