

Deciding Between a Puppy or Older Golden Retriever

Now that you have done the research and decided that the Golden Retriever is the right breed of dog for you, it is time to consider whether you want a baby puppy, a somewhat older puppy, a middle aged dog or a senior citizen. There are benefits and drawbacks to each, so let's discuss them in detail to help you decide. We will talk about how to find a quality puppy or rescue organization and how to avoid the bad sources in our article [Choosing a Reputable Breeder or Rescue Group](#).

Many people feel that the best way to have a great dog is to start with a puppy that you can train from the beginning. Assuming you are starting with a healthy, mentally stable puppy, how the puppy turns out, a well-mannered little-angel, obnoxious-hellion or fearful scaredy-dog, rests upon your shoulders as a direct reflection of your ability to raise, train and socialize the puppy. Regardless, it is important to keep in mind that puppyhood, while highly rewarding and fun, comes with a huge responsibility and commitment that may be more intense than having adopted an older pup. In our experience as certified, professional animal trainers we frequently hear experienced dog owners exclaiming how much more work "this puppy" is in comparison to their "previous puppy." Actually, this is rarely based on fact, but rather on memories. After living with and loving a loyal, faithful companion for eight to fifteen years, it is difficult to remember the house training "accidents", chewed up shoes and other mischief your now senior dog put you through when she was a puppy. Most folks merely choose to remember the love, laughter and good times you've shared instead of the puppy biting, midnight trips outside in the rain to go potty, lack of sleep and constant supervision that a young puppy requires. In addition to those midnight trips outdoors, puppies just need more time and attention than older dogs do. They require near-constant supervision and direction, short but frequent play sessions, tons of socialization to the world, noises, people and other dogs, lots of short, fun training sessions, lots of cuddle time, love and play. It is not acceptable to adopt a young puppy and then leave her locked up in a crate for 8-10 hours, come home and play with her, feed her, potty her and then put her in her crate for another 8 hours while you sleep. Puppies need a lot of attention and depend on you for everything, especially guidance and time spent together. If you are honest with yourself and you are certain that you are equipped to deal with the special needs of a young puppy, there is no denying that there is a special joy in being the second parent to your new family member.

There are also slightly older puppies in need of good homes. Since Golden Retrievers remain young at heart for years, many people consider adolescent dogs (older than 9 months, less than two years) to still be "puppies". Whether you are looking at a pup in the younger or older end of this spectrum, you can frequently find a great pup to join your family. Younger puppies and adolescent puppies are both a lot of fun, and should have most if not all of their shots done and they may already be spayed or neutered. Please be sure to acquire proof, do not make any assumptions when it comes to your dog's health. Regardless of the level of care that has been previously provided, we recommend you take your new pup to a licensed veterinarian once you have adopted him or her for a wellness check up. You may luck out and get one that is already crate trained and house trained, but don't count on it.

People give up their puppies for a variety of reasons, and unfortunately, rarely do we hear the truth behind the reason. In our rescue work, with many Seattle area shelters, including Evergreen Golden

Retriever Rescue and the Seattle Humane Society, we have encountered many dogs that were given away most likely because the first family simply could not provide the time and patience it takes to raise a baby puppy, finding the work involved to be more than they imagined. Often the pup pays the price for the human's lack of knowledge and understanding. You may find a puppy that was under-socialized as a pup that needs a new family willing to invest time, effort and training expenses to get him back on the right path. As you will read about in our article [Choosing a Reputable Breeder or Rescue Group](#), you may be able to adopt a quality, older puppy from a reputable, local breeder or breed club rescue group who may know a little about the dog's history, temperament or behavior patterns; remember that people giving up their dogs often lie or "glaze-over" problems when surrendering the dog to the agency. If you adopt from a private party, the original family or their representative, you are likely to not get the full truth about the reason why they are giving up the dog. Unfortunately, this "withholding of information" is so common that we have recognize it and learned to expect, preferring to learn the truth from what the dog can tell us instead. Often these reasons a dog is re-homed is based around a behavior problem the family is not willing to deal with or admit to, which usually could have been prevented to begin with or easily remedied. Sometimes, however the truth is revealed, giving the pup's future home an idea of the training, socialization or care that will be necessary. Listen carefully and ask leading question; try to scout out as much information as is possible. It is extremely important to recognize that whomever had your puppy before you most likely did not supply him or her with adequate socialization or training, so be prepared to work extra hard to overcome any problematic behaviors your pup may have already learned. The pup may or may not be already house trained, but we can help you through those kinds of issues, just as if your pup were a newborn. You can often get a great dog at a much less expensive price by adopting a little older, but you do miss out on those adorable, baby moments that comes with adopting young.

Adopting a dog in his prime is frequently an excellent choice. Even some of the greatest dogs we have ever known were rescued in the young adult/middle age segment of their lives. Many of them could regale us with great stories if only they could talk. They have experienced life and survived! You may find they have a little or a lot of training, and are hopefully house trained. They still require exercise and good chew toys as necessities, but often in less demanding amounts than a puppy. Specifically try to find out as much as you can about how this dog gets along with other pets that are or will be in your household. Do they like children that are the same age as yours, you grandchildren and neighbor kids? Try to avoid all major issues or conflicts that you ca. Older dogs are more set in their ways and while progressive change can happen, it can be slower and more difficult with age. Look into the dog's health history; get a vet's opinion even if you have to pay for it. Are there foreseeable major vet bills looming in the future?

There is a very special category left to talk about and that would be our senior dogs. Senior Golden are loving, loyal, happy to be with you, still like to play, but for much shorter sessions, enjoy walking and investigating the world, but at a more relaxed place. As Golden age, their faces take on a special white mask we lovingly refer to as "Clown Faces" and with their wise, laughing eyes and goofball grins, they will steal your heart away. The only down side to adopting a senior is that they won't be around forever, but you will get to share some of their most precious moments with them, too. You may have slightly

higher veterinarian bills is the dog needs treatment or medication for an illness, but you will counter some of that in spending less for near-constant chews that you would need for a puppy. Be assured, your senior Golden will love you with all of his heart and you will be thankful for the years you spend together; it is an experience you will never forget.

For more information on Golden Retrievers, proper care, grooming, training them, and more, please feel welcome to enjoy our other articles online, our mini-course and e-book available at <http://www.SpectacularGoldens.com>. We hope you find the love, companionship and faithful friend that you seek! Good Luck!

By Gayle Ballinger, CPDT-KA

For more information on how you can build a better relationship with your dog, contact **Gayle Ballinger, CPDT-KA** at: info@PawsitiveStepsSeattle.com or **(206) 799-0521**. Visit her website at <http://www.PawsitiveStepsSeattle.com> or <http://www.SpectacularGoldens.com>.

Gayle Ballinger is fiercely committed to guiding family pet owners everywhere to achieve a fun, trusting relationship with your pets so you can enjoy the type of unique relationship you originally dreamed of when you first considered adopting a companion animal. If you are looking for a proven professional who can guide you to address puppy raising and house training, settling a new rescue dog into your home or overcoming separation anxiety or aggression issues you've come to the right place.

With over 12 years of experience working with amazing clients with similar worries and concerns and guiding them to achieve remarkable success, Gayle's mission and commitment is to help you reach your specific goals and dreams of living happily with your dog and enjoying activities together.

Gayle's path to become a Certified Pet Dog Trainer became clear at an early age. One of her earliest memories is sitting on a curb in front of a market petting two Dobermans who were tied up to a mailbox waiting for their owner. Decades later, she still says "Hello!" to every dog she meets and passes on the street. Gayle is also an AKC S.T.A.R. and Canine Good Citizen Evaluator and Doggone Safe "Be A Tree" presenter.

Gayle approaches each of her clients with an open mind, she listens to your needs and desires, and then works with you to custom-tailor a training plan that will accomplish your goals while respecting your schedule and budget so that you can feel confident in engaging her to guide you through assessing, preventing and solving behavior problems. Over the years, Gayle's expertise has been honored with remarkable and notable accolades including being named Pasado's Volunteer of the Week, Vice Commodore of the Yacht Dogs Yacht Club, and being chosen as the Official Trainer for Brookside Elementary School's Special Education Animal Assistant Therapy Dog-in-Training, Brooke. Her work, articles and perspectives have been featured in the Shoreline Enterprise Newspaper, The Bothell/Kenmore Reporter, The Dog Service Network, The Yacht Dogs Yacht Club, Dogwise.com Forums, BoatUS Forums and as guest speaker to the Snohomish County C.E.R.T. (Community Emergency Response Team) Team Leaders group.

To engage Gayle to speak to your group, organization or community, email her at info@PawsitiveStepsSeattle.com or call at (206) 799-0521. Or enroll in one of her informal, family-

oriented classes, behavioral consultations, workshops or private training programs or visit our Classes and Services page at <http://www.PawsitiveStepsSeattle.com> for scheduling and enrollment.