



Raising two puppies at once is not easy and it's certainly not for everyone. If you're wondering whether to get two instead of one, there are a few things you should consider first.

double

What I'm about to describe is probably a familiar situation to some of you. You go along to the Humane Society, shelter, or breeder to choose your longed-for puppy. There are two left, both as cute as the other. How do you choose? It seems so cruel to split them up and leave one lonely puppy behind. Then it dawns on you—why not take them both? After all, you'll be housebreaking one, so one more won't make a difference. Right? That's how my husband and I came home from the Scott County Humane Society one day in 2003 with not one, but two bouncy balls of puppy fluff. I admit that looking back it was

a naïve decision, but five years later, we have two much larger canine companions whom we wouldn't change for all the money in the world.

When I first started researching this article, I was taken aback by how many articles I came across by breeders, vehemently stating that under no circumstances would they allow anyone to buy more than one puppy. In fact, some suggested that if anyone ever considered buying two, they would not sell them a dog at all. Such people, they argued, were cruel to animals and had no idea what they were doing. Looking across at Sam and Lizzie as they lay curled up together, I wondered



By Fiona Young-Brown

trouble

what I had done that was so terrible. Obviously I know that I am biased but we have two fabulous dogs. Everyone says so. That's not to say that raising two puppies at once has been easy and it's certainly not for everyone. If you are wondering whether to get two instead of one, there are a few things you should definitely consider first....

Cost

A lot of people have the idea that buying two at once will be cheaper. One dog bed, one crate, etc. That won't be the case. One puppy plus one puppy equals two puppies, which equals twice the cost. Vet bills, food bills, boarding bills—they'll all be doubled. Dog trainer Dan O'Leary advises that even

Sam (left) and Lizzie are both a Pomeranian-Siberian Husky mix. As puppies, they were adopted from the Scott County Humane Society in xxxxxxxxxxxxxx, xx.



if they spend most of the day together, the dogs should still each have their own separate crate. Even best friends fight and they need to know that they each have space of their own.

Sex

If you're going to bring two or more dogs into the same home, you need to consider the sex of each dog. Two un-neutered males can become very aggressive with each other as they vie for territory and alpha status. Likewise, two female dogs will not necessarily get along with each other. Spaying and neutering is highly recommended and, if you get a boy and girl as we did, it's essential. I'm a big fan of spaying or neutering anyway, but in a home with multiple dogs, it is key to avoiding unwanted litters and unwanted aggression.

Little or Large

Do you know how big each dog will be? It is a running joke in our household that we have the biggest Pomeranians in town. My husband wanted a Pomeranian and even though the puppies were a mix, we figured they would be so small that two would barely take up any space around the house. What we didn't learn until later is that they are a Pomeranian—Siberian Husky mix. By the time Sam topped out at 55 pounds, we were the owners of a much larger crate and a large indoor run. Fortunately for us, size was not a problem, but it's an all too common story of the owner who dumps the dog at the shelter because he's no longer small and cute. I've known people buy Labrador puppies and then not want them as adults because they are "too big." Be absolutely sure how much dog you want. If they grow

to be bigger than expected, can you handle having two in the house?

Toilet Training

On some occasions this can be a positive. We were very fortunate that Sam never wanted to use the inside of our house as a toilet and, for the most part, Lizzie copied and learned from him, (with the exception of the day she kindly dragged my shoes over to rest atop the pile of pooh she left on the stairs). We were lucky. You may find yourself at the other extreme and constantly cleaning up twice the puddles and piles.

Behavior, and Socialization

This is where owning two puppies can have numerous pros and cons. On the one hand, they can learn from each other which can help enormously with toilet training and behavior training in general. On the other hand, you may think you've seen the destruction that one bored puppy can do. Now try to imagine what two can do together! Fences, furniture, carpet—it's quite amazing what two sets of sharp, little puppy teeth can accomplish in a very short time.

One key benefit of owning two puppies, or two dogs of any age, is the company factor. Dogs are social pack animals by nature. They love company. The staff at Dogtown, a dog daycare and kennel service in Lexington, note that dogs who live with other dogs tend to be less depressed when their owners are gone for long periods of time and, because they have a constant playmate, are often less likely to be overweight. They also tend to do well in group play with other dogs. There is the risk of over protectiveness though, and one may become more aggressive if they feel

that their sibling is being threatened. This is something that can be dealt with in training.

It is important to make sure that the puppies, much as they love being together, learn to spend time apart from each other. Although this may develop naturally as they grow older, you should spend one-on-one time with each of them and occasionally separate them so that they are not entirely dependent upon one another.

Good training is vital with any dog, but I would suggest it is even more so with two. That doesn't have to mean a strict regimen in any sense of the word but they must learn to recognize you, the owner, as head of the pack.

Rearing two puppies is not an easy task. Like any dog owner, I am biased and think that my two are the greatest creatures in the canine world, but would I recommend buying two puppies? It depends on the person and in most instances, I would suggest getting one and then getting another in a few years if you still want to have a multi-dog household. Having two people rather than one in the house certainly helped with training and discipline, and there are most definitely things that we would do differently next time around. Then again, as I look down at my feet and see Lizzie curled up under my computer desk and Sam laying protectively across the doorway, I know that I am lucky to have twice the puppy, and twice the love.



Fiona Young-Brown is a freelance writer and life coach. Originally from England, she now lives in Lexington, KY with her husband, Nic, and their two Pomeranian-Siberian Husky mixes, Sam and Lizzie.