

Here to help you take great care of your kids:

The Parent Page

Think twice before giving pets as holiday gifts

(MC) Many people consider pets great holiday gifts. But in spite of their popularity as presents, pets do not always make the most appropriate holiday gift.

Giving a pet as a present seems like a great idea, but shoppers might want to give it more consideration before giving a gift that is such a considerable responsibility. A puppy at Christmas or a bunny at Easter may be given with good intentions, but that well-meaning sentiment can easily backfire, ending with the pet being given up for adoption when recipients don't feel up to the task of raising a pet. In such instances, the companion animal pays the steepest price.

Though it often is, buying a pet should not be an impulse purchase. You see sad eyes looking back at you from behind a cage door and want to give that animal a new home. However, introducing an animal into a family is not a decision to take lightly. You must factor how well the pet will fit in with the family dynamic. Do schedules allow for quality time spent with the animal? Is it a financially good time to care for an animal that will cost money? Are you aware of how long the pet will live? Making those big decisions for a person on the receiving end of your well-intentioned gift may be crossing a line. Would you want to have such a life-changing decision made for you?

The hectic nature of the holiday season can be a difficult time for a pet to grow acclimated to its new environment. He or she may be frightened to assimilate or take longer to settle down. Pets often need several weeks of quiet and constant care to become comfortable in their new environments. Here are some other reasons why the holidays are not a good time for new pets.

- Holiday visitors may frighten the new pet and he or she may become weary of strangers at the outset.
- The activities in the household may pose safety hazards for the young animal. An abundance of rich foods and various decorations could be ingested, potentially causing illness.
- New pets should be carefully supervised around children to see how they behave. A child may not be accustomed

to handling a puppy or kitten and could injure the animal. Similarly, the pet may be skittish and lash out at the child. Adults busy with holiday obligations may be easily distracted and miss how their child is interacting with the new pet.

- Once the glow of the holidays wears off, children may be disillusioned with the new responsibility that has fallen into their hands. They may not like the responsibility that comes with being a good pet owner.



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