

Student's Name

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Choosing a Pet

People say that animals are our best friends, and that seems to be true especially for those who have pets. We buy dogs and cats for various reasons, but there must be definitely something special about them considering how many pets we can see outside in the park, or at your friends' places, or maybe you also have one. Some companies even buy pets who live at their offices and are regarded as talismans. So, whatever the type of pets people have, let's try to figure out why so many people want to have an animal companion.

It is believed that dogs were the very first animals domesticated by humans. For over 15,000 years dogs have worked to earn the distinction of being "man's best friend." Dogs have not only offered love and affection, but worked side-by-side with their human counterpart for centuries (Foster). People feel better with their pets, and some researches prove that there are emotional benefits of dog companionship:

- **Adjust to serious illness and death.** Children often turn to their pet for comfort if a friend or family member dies or leaves the family. Grieving adults who did not have a close source of human support were also found to have less depression if they had a pet.
- **Be less anxious and feel more safe.** Pet owners tend to feel less afraid of being a victim of crime when walking with a dog or having a dog in the home.
- **Relax and reduce everyday stress.** Pets can help us relax and focus our attention away from our problems and worries.
- **Have physical contact.** This ability to have something to touch and pet is very important. More and more studies show how important touch is to our physical and emotional health.

- **Lift our mood.** Pets decrease our feelings of loneliness and isolation by providing companionship to all generations.
- **Feel less lonely.** Pets can help ease the sense of loneliness or isolation we feel (Foster).

In addition, Dr. Mehmet Oz proves that pets can also improve your health. He says that pets can reduce the risk of allergies, asthma, and eczema. The simple act of petting an animal can help you lower your blood pressure. Moreover, a study conducted in 2009 shows that people who own a cat are 37 percent less likely to die of a heart attack (Oz).

On the other hand, you always have to give something away to get something back. Having a dog is both a lifetime commitment, since animals develop deep bonds with you and your family, as well as considerable financial commitment, since basic medical care can range from \$800 to \$1000 a year (Wagner). If you want to have an exotic pet, you should better think twice. First of all, chances are you may break the law, so check if having such an animal at home is permitted. And it is clear that having an exotic animal at home can be dangerous. For instance, in Texas a four-year-old mauled by a mountain lion his aunt kept as a pet, in Connecticut a 55-year-old woman's face permanently disfigured by her friend's lifelong pet chimpanzee, in Ohio an 80-year-old man was attacked by a 200-pound kangaroo, in Nebraska a 34-year-old man was strangled to death by his pet snake. And that list does not capture the number of people who become sick from coming into contact with zoonotic diseases (Slater).

Choosing a pet is a very important decision. One should weigh all the pros and cons, think whether he/she is ready for that, and only after that make up your mind. And if you finally decided to get one, treat it right, and you will surely be a happy pet owner.

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