#### Evaluation sample only



How to be a Top Dog Owner

By Karl Matthews

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## Hints from a Happy Owner

This is where I should trot out my academic qualifications, show you pictures of all the awards my dogs have won and letters from relieved owners whose dogs I've stopped from relieving themselves on the Persian carpet or the Persian cat!

But, I left school when I was only a few years older than most dogs are after their obedience training. My dogs have all been low-cost mixed breeds and the only awards they got were our enthusiastic applause and the odd bit of chocolate, before I found out how bad an idea that was.

But there has always been a contented, well-fed dog curled up near my feet while I've been earning my living in my home office over three decades or so.

This book is based on what worked with my dogs, many conversations with vets, until I learned they usually charge for the length of consultations, good ideas from friends and neighbors and what I had actually seen them do – both good and bad.

I believe that you will learn things in my book that your dog wants you to know.

# Karl Matthews

## Before you get Your Dog

My father was also a life-long dog owner. He frequently told me, as well as anyone else that would listen, "Owners should be tested and licensed – then there would not be hardly any trouble from dogs!"

I have heard of and seen enough instances of cruel treatment that ignorant people have inflicted on dogs in their care, deliberately or through carelessness, to think he had a point with licensing owners.

But, it's still the general rule that anyone can have a dog, just like anyone can take on the responsibility of having a baby!

**License:** In some countries, you will have to get a license for your dog, but the council officer that collects the fee won't really care if you know how to look after your new pal, just as long as you know when you have to renew your license and understand the map showing what areas of your city are now off-limits when you have your dog with you.

#### **Think First**

I know that some people could probably take a dog that they thought was unsuitable back where they got it, but I think that my readers who've invested their money in this book will care enough to want to make the right choice the first time and not cause distress to themselves or any animal.

Before you get a dog or any other pet, please consider these points:

**Have you got room for your dog?** Whatever kind of dog you might be thinking about getting, it will need space around your home that you are probably using for other purposes right now.

Even the smallest and laziest dog will need running room, a place to sleep and somewhere to relieve itself.

You'll also have to prepare in advance how you can prevent it from getting into areas where you don't want it (**good luck!**)

Otherwise, you might want to get a parakeet.

**Have you got time for your dog?** With the demands of jobs and our social lives putting pressure on all of us, finding time to spend with your new puppy to teach it some rules and just have fun might be quite difficult to arrange.

Then, there's the extra time you'll need to keep your dog and your home clean.

But a dog is not a toy or an entertainment device that you can just switch off when you're too busy. Its needs companionship, care, and training will be constant and probably the greatest in the first couple of months after you bring it into your home.

If you don't have the time, but get a dog anyway, then you will both suffer.

Have you got enough money to keep a dog? You will have extra expenses when you get your dog. You won't be able to maintain your dog's health and temperament just by feeding it your table scraps.

But, it's <u>not</u> just the cost of dog food.

You will be facing a list of recurring expenses; visits to the veterinarian and clothing (leads, collars, coats) as well as bedding and toys, (even big dogs love toys, because it means their owner will spend time with them.)

I'll give you some tips about saving money in some of these areas in later chapters.

**Have you got the strength you'll need for your dog?** Dogs come in such a variety of sizes and temperaments that I'm sure you can find your perfect match.

But, you'll need to be fairly fit, both mentally and physically, to get the best out of your person/dog relationship.

Walking your dog will, of course, have health benefits for you both but you'll need to be able to keep up with your pal and stop it from going anywhere that you don't want it to until you've got it trained so it knows the rules of the sidewalk. You'll probably have to lift your dog on to the examination table at the vet and lift it off your furniture on some occasions too.

You'll also need a reserve of emotional strength.

There'll be times when it will be very hard not to lose your temper or even hit your dog over some mistake. But, many of those errors, in my experience, happened because I thought that my dog thinks the way that I, a human, does.

In other words, we need to be able to step back, mentally and physically, and take a deep breath, then not do anything that, in a moment, could sour forever the strong bond we've built with our dog.

We also need plenty of strength for those times when things don't go right; your dog is sick or must be put to sleep.

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## **Purebred or a Happy Mixture?**

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