



## ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS: A WISH LIST FROM THE DOG

*Emily Fisher, CPDT-KA Scratch and Sniff Canine Services, Guelph, ON*

### 1. A Responsible Adoption

If you buy me from a breeder, know my breed, lineage, and breeder. Understand what a good breeder is and isn't. A good breeder will know if I'm the right puppy for you or if my littermate would be better suited. A good breeder will ask more questions than you think possible before you even lay eyes on me. Don't take a puppy home from a commercial breeder or a pet store because you feel sorry for it – this puppy will be replaced with another puppy from the same source. Despite your good intentions, this isn't rescue. Good breeders don't sell to pet stores and don't breed for profit. There's lots of useful advice about how to find a good breeder at [www.pupquest.org](http://www.pupquest.org).

If you rescue me, adopt from a rescue that has had me vetted and spayed or neutered. A good rescue will tell you everything they know about me and will ask you lots and lots of questions. Don't be offended if the process takes a couple weeks and if they require a home visit. Know that your money is going to support the rescue of more dogs like me, and remember that I cost the rescue more than your adoption fee will cover! A good rescue will do everything in their power to find the most suitable dog for you and the most suitable home for me.

### 2. Positive Socialization

Socialization is the most important gift you can give me when I'm a puppy. If I'm going to live in your crazy world of balloons, trucks, dogs, strollers, and children, I need to be exposed to them before I'm 16 weeks old. More importantly, every experience with these new things should be the most positive, happy experience I've ever had. It doesn't matter how much love you give me, if you don't socialize me properly in these formative weeks, I will likely be afraid or aggressive when I'm exposed to new things as an adult. Socializing me properly is the most important investment you can make in me.

### 3. A High-Quality Diet

You are what you eat, and I'm no different. When you feed me a low-quality, highly processed food, I'm not going to feel well. I may live to a ripe old age, but how much longer might I live, and how much better might I feel, if I'm fed well? Whole, unprocessed food made into a balanced diet is ideal. Good food is the gift of well-being. Find out how to pick the best food for me at [www.dogfoodproject.com](http://www.dogfoodproject.com).

### 4. Positive Training

Sometimes training can be hard for humans to figure out. Just remember this: I will work in order to gain something I want. There is never a reason to scare me or cause me pain in the name of training. I'll be better behaved and we'll have a better relationship if you learn how to engage me and get me excited about learning new things with you. Want to find a trainer? Visit [www.petprofessionalguild.com](http://www.petprofessionalguild.com).

### 5. Teach me How to Live in a Human World

Remember that I'm not a tiny person in a furry coat. I'm not capable

of understanding your morals or etiquette. If you don't want me to jump on your guests, I need to be rewarded for sitting. If you don't want me to sleep on your bed, I need a comfortable bed of my own. Don't take my good behaviour for granted and only pay attention to me by punishing me when I do something wrong. My behaviour is a reflection of your behaviour; you can't expect me to change without first changing yourself. Teaching me how to live in your world is a gift to both of us.

### 6. Health Care

Regular vet visits are an important part of keeping me in good health, but I need you to give me more than just an annual checkup. Give me daily outdoor adventures to exercise my mind and body. Sometimes I may even require extra health-care professionals on my team, such as chiropractors, massage therapists, naturopaths, and physiotherapists. Do your part by cultivating a relationship with other members of my health-care team. Ask for resources when discussing possible diagnoses, explore the various options for my care with them, and ask smart, well-researched questions. Keep your own records of my health so you can catch problems early. Do simple, routine health-care procedures like weekly nail trims, regular brushing of my teeth, and checking for lumps and bumps.

### 7. Respect and Protection

I will sometimes need something and you won't understand why. You may think it funny that I'm afraid of a garbage can, but don't laugh and drag me past it. I need you to protect me even when you don't think I need protecting. I need you to be my advocate because I cannot speak for myself.

Give me these gifts, and I'll give back to you all year long.