

IF YOU DECIDE TO GET A PUPPY INSTEAD OF A RESCUE DOG

(Thoughts from a "Rescuer's" point of view)

Please do some things when you get that puppy to make sure he/she will grow up to be a well socialized little dog. I don't want to get that phone call saying, "We have a problem dog and need to place him/her with a different family."

Consider the following:

- Choose a reputable breeder who values temperament highly in the breeding program
<http://www.sfbaywestieclub.com/puppy.htm> and <http://www.WestieEduMi.com>.
- Make sure you are allowed to meet the parents of the puppy...accept no excuses. Be sure the breeder knows the health of the ancestors at least 3 generations back and has done health testing on the parents before breeding!!!
- Get the book "Child Proofing your Dog" by Brian Kilcommons and Sarah Wilson (Even if you don't have kids!!)
- Remember that this is a terrier.....you need to be a very strong owner. Don't ever let that dog think that it is alpha.
- Go to puppy school and then obedience school. This does a lot more than just training the dog.
 - It trains you
 - It helps the dog to understand who is boss
 - It socializes that dog with other dogs and with people
- Just because your dog does well with your kids, doesn't mean that you don't need to socialize it with other kids. So many dogs come to us because, while they are fine with the family children, they are nipping at the neighborhood kids. Dogs sometimes become very territorial about "their kids". Make sure it meets other kids who are gentle and friendly with it. (We don't place rescue dogs with kids under age 10. Many of our rescues come to us because they are not doing well with kids. Consider other breeds if your kids are young.)
- Never allow it to growl at a kid. Be very firm about this. If you let it get away with this, it is likely to try to get away with more.
- Westies hate to be ignored. It is one of the best ways to let the dog know you are unhappy. Tell it "NO" firmly and pointedly ignore it for 5 or 10 minutes.
- Make your dog earn its privileges; make it work for its treats
- Be careful about letting it into your bed. If it is accepting its place as NOT ALPHA, then you are probably OK. But if you see signs of its trying to be alpha, don't give it the privilege of your bed.
- Always supervise when the dog is with kids. If you can't be there to supervise, crate the dog. Don't give it a chance to make a bad mistake.
- Make sure it is never left outside totally unsupervised where neighborhood kids can tease it. Don't let your kids tease it.
- Remember that it is small and more easily hurt than a large dog. It WILL defend itself if kids try to pull its legs, hair, tail, etc.
- This is a dog that needs to be in a fenced area or leashed. It isn't a dog to let run loose. It will "go deaf" if it sees a squirrel, no matter how well it is trained.
- Pre-school and elementary school children are at an age when they are super-active and this is a dog that is easily "wound up". Don't let things get out of hand.
- If you ever have any problems you can't resolve, find a dog trainer who can help you before it gets out of hand. Deb Duncan, COME, SIT, STAYcanine etiquette <http://www.thedogspeaks.com>
WESTYLUV24@msn.com; also <http://www.westielovers.com/westieworld/westiewisdom/index.html> Jane Fink is a well know Westie trainer who answers training questions on line.

It may not seem important to do all this work with the puppy, but if you don't, - you will pay for it in the long run. The biggest favor you can do for your dog is to make sure that if anything happens to you, it will be easy to find a new home for that dog so it won't have to be put down. That means making sure it is socialized and flexible. Having a puppy is a lot like having another kid, except that the puppy will grow up into a dog who has huge teeth and great strength for its size. It was bred to hunt and kill small animals. Never forget its potential. Westies can be wonderful family dogs but it takes work.