



# “Cat vs Dog Parenting”

## Which Companion Truly Fits Your Lifestyle?

In homes across New York, Tokyo, London, Mumbai, Sydney, and Berlin, a familiar debate continues: **Are you a cat parent or a dog parent?**

The question goes far beyond preference. It touches lifestyle, personality, emotional needs, cultural background, financial readiness, and even mental health.

People no longer simply “own” pets in today’s world. They **parent** them. We celebrate their birthdays, buy premium food, schedule vet appointments like paediatric visits, and rearrange our homes around their comfort. But cat parenting and dog parenting are profoundly different journeys.

### The Rise of “Pet Parenting” Culture

We have witnessed a remarkable transformation in how we relate to animals in our homes over the last two decades. Pets are no longer seen merely as companions or property; we increasingly see them as family. In countries like the United States, where more than 65% of households own a pet, and across rapidly urbanizing regions worldwide, we are embracing a new identity — that of “pet parents.” At the same time, the global pet care industry has expanded into a multi-billion-dollar market, reflecting how much we are willing to invest emotionally and financially in our animals’ well-being.

This shift is closely connected to the way our lives have changed. We are marrying later, having children later — or sometimes not at all. We are living in apartments instead of large family homes, working remotely instead of commuting daily, and often living far from extended family networks. We may experience isolation despite being surrounded by millions of people in fast-paced urban environments. Pets provide structure to our routines, warmth to our spaces, and a sense of daily purpose that modern life sometimes lacks.

We no longer simply “own” pets — we bond with them deeply. We celebrate their birthdays, worry about their health, and adjust our schedules around their needs. They become emotional anchors in uncertain times, companions in quiet moments, and sources of unconditional affection. They fill relational spaces in many ways that modern society has gradually reshaped. We are not just caring for animals through pet parenting; we are redefining family itself.

#### Key Points

The concept of pets has transformed dramatically over the last two decades.



- In the United States alone, over 65% of households own a pet.
- Globally, urban pet ownership has surged, especially among millennials and Gen Z.
- The global pet care market is projected to cross hundreds of billions of dollars annually.

### **Why this shift?**

Modern life has changed:

- Delayed parenthood
- Urban living
- Remote work
- Smaller families
- Increased loneliness in cities

Pets now serve as emotional anchors, companions, and family members. The term “fur baby” may sound playful, but it reflects a real psychological bond. Research shows human brains release oxytocin—the same bonding hormone released between parents and infants—when interacting with pets. However, the parenting experience differs significantly between cats and dogs.

## **Personality and Psychological Differences**

Psychological research suggests that when we choose between a cat and a dog, we may also be revealing something about ourselves. Our personalities often influence the kind of companionship we seek. Many of us who are naturally outgoing, energetic, and socially expressive may feel drawn toward dogs. Dogs align well with a lifestyle that includes structure, shared activity, and regular interaction. When we enjoy morning walks, outdoor time, meeting people in parks, and maintaining daily routines, a dog often fits seamlessly into that rhythm. Dogs invite us into engagement — they need walks, training, playtime, and social bonding. They reflect and amplify our active, relational side in many ways.

On the other hand, some of us value independence, creativity, and quieter environments. We may appreciate flexibility in our schedule and feel comfortable with space — both physical and emotional. In such cases, cats often resonate more naturally with our temperament. Cats are self-directed; they approach affection on their own terms. When we are patient, observant, and comfortable with subtle emotional expression, we begin to notice the quiet depth of a cat’s companionship — a slow blink, a soft purr, a silent presence beside us. With cats, connection is not demanded; it is gradually built.

Of course, these are tendencies, not rigid rules. Many of us embody both structure and spontaneity, sociability and solitude. We may enjoy lively interaction while still cherishing quiet evenings at home. That is why the deeper question is not simply whether we are “dog people” or “cat people.” Instead, we must ask ourselves: do we prefer



expressive companionship that actively participates in our daily life, or do we find comfort in quiet coexistence that unfolds gently over time? The answer often reveals not just our pet preference, but the emotional rhythm we seek in our relationships.

### **Key Points**

Psychology research suggests that personality traits often influence pet choice.

#### **Dog Parents Tend To:**

- Score higher in extraversion
- Enjoy structured routines
- Seek social interaction
- Appreciate active lifestyles

Dogs require engagement. Walks. Training. Playtime. Socialization. They flourish in shared activity.

#### **Cat Parents Tend To:**

- Score higher in openness
- Value independence
- Enjoy quieter environments
- Adapt to flexible routines

Cats are self-directed. They choose when to interact. Their affection is subtle and often earned through patience. But these are general trends—not strict categories. Many people embody both qualities. The deeper question becomes:

**Do you prefer expressive companionship or quiet coexistence?**

## **Time Commitment: Daily Life with a Dog vs a Cat**

One of the most practical differences between cat and dog parenting lies in how we spend our time each day. When we choose a dog, we are choosing a relationship built around active participation. Dogs evolved as pack animals, which means they are biologically wired for companionship and social bonding. They do not simply share our homes; they want to share our routines. We quickly realize that our daily schedule begins to revolve around their needs.

We commit to one to three walks a day, regular feeding times, grooming sessions depending on the breed, and ongoing training reinforcement. Beyond the basics, we must also provide mental stimulation through play, interaction, and learning. When we neglect these needs, even unintentionally, dogs can become bored, anxious, or destructive. Chewed furniture, excessive barking, or signs of separation anxiety are often not “bad



behaviour,” but signals that we have not met their need for engagement. A dog’s well-being is closely tied to how present and consistent we are.

This is why many of us ask, especially as working professionals, “Can we manage a dog with a full-time job?” The answer depends largely on the support systems we can create — dog walkers, pet daycare, flexible work arrangements, or family assistance. However, even with help, dogs generally require a steady and structured presence in our lives. They thrive when we provide routine, leadership, and reliable interaction. Choosing a dog means recognizing that we are not just adding a pet to our home; we are reshaping our daily rhythm to include active, shared responsibility.

### **Key Points**

One of the most practical differences lies in time.

## **Dog Parenting: High Engagement**

Dogs evolved as pack animals. They are wired for social bonding.

Daily needs include:

- 1–3 walks
- Feeding schedules
- Grooming (breed dependent)
- Training reinforcement
- Mental stimulation

A bored dog can become destructive, anxious, or depressed. Working professionals often ask:

“Can I manage a dog with a full-time job?” The answer depends on support systems—dog walkers, daycare, family help—but dogs generally require consistent presence. They succeed on structure.

## **Cat Parenting: Structured Independence**

Cats evolved as solitary hunters. They are far more self-sufficient.

Daily needs include:

- Litter box cleaning
- Feeding routine
- Occasional grooming
- Environmental enrichment (scratching posts, climbing areas)

Cats can comfortably spend time alone during work hours. But the idea that cats are emotionally detached is a myth. They form strong attachments, just expressed differently.

Instead of jumping at the door, a cat may:



- Sit quietly beside you
- Blink slowly (a sign of trust)
- Purr softly

It's companionship without constant demand.

## Emotional Bonding: Loud Love vs Quiet Devotion

When we live with dogs, we quickly notice how openly they express their emotions. Dogs wear their hearts where we can see them. When we return home, they greet us with wagging tails, jumping excitement, bright eyes, and an energy that feels almost celebratory. Their protective instincts emerge naturally, and they respond clearly to our moods. If we are sad, they stay close. If we are joyful, they seem to amplify that joy. Research even suggests that dogs can recognize our facial expressions and interpret the tone of our voice, which helps explain why we often feel so emotionally understood by them.

When we live with cats, the emotional language shifts — but it does not disappear. Cats communicate in quieter, more nuanced ways. Their affection may appear through a gentle head-butt, a soft purr, or the simple act of choosing to sleep beside us. Sometimes they follow us silently from room to room, not demanding attention, but maintaining connection. We learn to read these subtle signals over time. With cats, bonding often feels like a gradual unfolding rather than an immediate display.

We realize that dog love often feels enthusiastic and outwardly expressive, while cat love feels intimate and understated. Neither is greater or lesser; they simply represent different relational styles. The real question for us becomes: do we feel most nourished by visible, energetic affection, or do we cherish quiet presence and subtle emotional depth? In understanding this, we begin to understand not only our pets — but ourselves.

## Key Points

Dogs wear their hearts openly.

They greet you with:

- Tail wagging
- Jumping excitement
- Protective instincts
- Clear emotional responsiveness

Dogs mirror human emotions remarkably well. Studies show they can recognize human facial expressions and tones of voice. Cats, on the other hand, communicate subtly.

**Their affection shows through:**



- Gentle head-butting
- Purring
- Sleeping near you
- Following you quietly from room to room

Dog love feels enthusiastic. Cat love feels intimate. Neither is superior. They simply reflect different relational styles.

## Training and Behavioural Expectations

When we bring a dog into our lives, we quickly understand that training is not optional — it is essential. Dogs require early obedience guidance to help them adapt to our homes and expectations. We may begin to see behavioural challenges without consistent structure such as excessive barking, separation anxiety, destructive chewing, or even aggression. These behaviours are rarely signs of a “bad” dog; rather, they reflect unmet needs or unclear boundaries. We should invest time, patience, and consistency to shape positive behaviour from the beginning.

We benefit from the fact that dogs are remarkably trainable. With repetition and reinforcement, they learn commands, routines, and sometimes even complex tasks. This ability to respond to structured training is what makes dogs ideal for service roles, therapy work, security assistance, and active family environments. When we commit to training, we build not only discipline but also trust. The process becomes a shared journey of communication and cooperation.

When we choose a cat, the training dynamic feels very different. In some ways, cats are easier to manage from the start. They naturally use a litter box, groom themselves efficiently, and do not require daily outdoor walks. Our responsibility shifts more toward maintaining a stable, enriching environment rather than teaching obedience commands. However, when behavioural issues arise in cats, they often stem from stress, environmental changes, or insufficient stimulation. A new home, unfamiliar visitors, or lack of scratching outlets can trigger unwanted behaviours.

Cats rarely respond to authority-based training methods. We cannot simply command compliance. Instead, we build cooperation through trust and environmental adjustments. Relationship matters more than instruction with cats. We learn to observe their signals, adjust surroundings, and create conditions where positive behaviour emerges naturally. In many ways, we do not command a cat — we negotiate, adapt, and cultivate mutual respect.

## Key Points

### Dogs: Trainable but Demanding

Dogs require early obedience training. Without it, behavioural issues may arise:



- Excessive barking
- Separation anxiety
- Chewing
- Aggression

However, dogs are highly trainable. With consistency, they learn commands, routines, and even complex tasks.

This makes them ideal for:

- Service roles
- Therapy work
- Active families

## Cats: Environment-Centred Behaviour

Cats are easier in some ways:

- Naturally litter train
- Groom themselves
- Don't require daily outdoor walks

But behavioral issues in cats often stem from:

- Stress
- Environmental changes
- Lack of stimulation

Unlike dogs, cats rarely respond to authority-based training. Their cooperation is relationship-based.

You don't command a cat—you negotiate with it.

## Financial Considerations

When we decide to become pet parents, we are also making a long-term financial commitment. Whether we choose a cat or a dog, the responsibilities extend far beyond the initial adoption or purchase cost. We must plan for food, vaccinations, routine veterinary visits, emergency medical care, grooming, and sometimes boarding or pet sitting when we travel. These recurring expenses become part of our monthly and annual budgeting. Responsible pet parenting means we prepare not only emotionally, but financially, for the life we are bringing into our home.

We may find that dogs cost more annually than cats. Dogs often require larger quantities of food, regular grooming depending on breed, and in many cases, daycare or walking services if we work long hours. Large dog breeds, in particular, tend to incur higher medical costs due to their size and breed-specific health conditions. Cats are typically less



expensive to maintain on a daily basis, but they still require consistent healthcare, quality nutrition, and preventive medical attention. Choosing a cat does not eliminate financial responsibility—it simply shifts its scale.

We are also seeing a rise in pet insurance, especially in Western countries, as more of us seek protection against unexpected veterinary bills. This reflects a broader understanding that pets are family members whose healthcare deserves planning. Ultimately, the deeper question we must ask ourselves is not which pet costs less, but whether we are prepared for a 10–18-year financial commitment. When we bring an animal into our lives, we are promising stability, care, and security for the entirety of their lifespan.

Financial responsibility is significant in both cases.

### **Typical Costs Include:**

- Food
- Vaccinations
- Routine vet visits
- Emergency care
- Grooming
- Boarding or pet sitting

### **Generally:**

- Dogs cost more annually due to food volume, grooming, and daycare needs.
- Cats are typically less expensive but still require regular healthcare.

Large dog breeds often incur higher medical costs. Pet insurance is increasingly popular in Western countries and expanding globally.

The real question:

**Are you prepared for a 10–18-year financial commitment?**

## **Space and Living Environment**

When we choose a pet, we should honestly evaluate the space in which we live. Urban housing has reshaped how we think about pet parenting. Many of us live in apartments, condominiums, or high-rise buildings where outdoor access is limited and square footage is modest. Our physical environment directly influences not only which animal we choose, but also how comfortably that animal can thrive within our daily setting.

If we are considering a dog, space becomes an important factor. Large breeds typically need room to move freely and regular access to outdoor areas for exercise and stimulation. Without adequate space and activity, they may become restless or stressed. Smaller dog breeds can adapt more easily to apartment living, but even then, we must



commit to daily walks and outdoor time. Regardless of size, dogs depend on us to provide physical outlets beyond the walls of our home.

Cats, by contrast, often adjust exceptionally well to compact living spaces. They do not require outdoor walks, and they are skilled at navigating smaller environments. However, while cats may not need horizontal space in abundance, they benefit greatly from vertical territory. When we add shelves, cat trees, or climbing structures, we create enrichment that satisfies their natural instincts. By thinking vertically rather than just horizontally, we can transform even a small apartment into a stimulating feline-friendly space.

Cats often integrate more seamlessly into our lifestyle for those of us living in high-rise urban settings. Indoor cats, in particular, tend to live longer than outdoor cats due to reduced exposure to traffic, predators, and disease. Ultimately, when we evaluate space and living environment, we are not simply asking whether a pet can fit into our home — we are asking whether our home can truly support the physical and psychological well-being of the animal we choose.

### **Key Points**

Urban housing plays a crucial role in pet choice.

### **Dogs:**

- Large breeds need space and outdoor access.
- Smaller breeds adapt to apartments but still require walks.

### **Cats:**

- Adapt extremely well to apartments.
- Benefit from vertical spaces like shelves and cat trees.
- Indoor cats live longer on average than outdoor cats.

For high-rise urban living, cats often integrate more easily.

## **Mental Health and Emotional Benefits**

When we welcome pets into our lives, we often discover that the benefits extend far beyond companionship. Research consistently shows that living with cats or dogs can positively influence our mental and physical well-being. As we interact with them, our blood pressure can lower, stress hormones decrease, and feelings of loneliness soften. The simple act of stroking fur, hearing a purr, or watching a tail wag can regulate our nervous system and stabilize our mood. In a world that often feels fast and overwhelming, pets help us slow down and reconnect with the present moment.

When we live with dogs, we are naturally encouraged toward movement and social engagement. Daily walks bring us outdoors, increasing physical activity and exposure to sunlight. We may meet neighbours at parks, exchange conversations with other pet



parents, and build small but meaningful community connections. Dogs often draw us outward into the world. Their enthusiasm can lift our energy and gently pull us out of emotional withdrawal.

When we live with cats, the emotional experience feels different but equally powerful. Cats often provide a calm, steady presence that reduces anxiety. Their quiet companionship can be especially comforting during stressful periods. For those of us struggling with depression, dogs may help by creating daily structure and accountability — feeding times, walks, routines that give the day rhythm and purpose. Cats, on the other hand, offer low-pressure emotional closeness. They sit beside us without demanding performance, providing connection without overwhelming expectation.

The emotional benefits continue across age groups. When children grow up with pets, we see how empathy, patience, and responsibility begin to develop naturally through daily care. We must consider physical capacity and lifestyle for elderly individuals. Cats may be easier to manage physically, requiring less outdoor exertion, while dogs can motivate continued movement and routine. In every case, whether we choose a cat or a dog, we are inviting not just companionship into our home, but a meaningful contribution to our emotional health and overall well-being.

### **Key points**

Both cats and dogs provide measurable mental health benefits.

Research indicates pet ownership can:

- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce stress hormones
- Decrease loneliness
- Improve mood stability

Dogs often encourage physical activity and social interaction. Cats often provide calm, anxiety-reducing companionship.

For individuals struggling with depression:

- Dogs can create daily structure.
- Cats can offer low-pressure emotional presence.

For children:

- Both foster empathy and responsibility.

For elderly individuals:

- Cats may be easier physically.
- Dogs provide motivation to stay active.



# Cultural Perspectives Across the World

Pet parenting does not look the same everywhere, because culture shapes how we understand animals in our lives. In the United States and much of Europe, we see a strong dog-centred culture. Parks are designed with designated dog areas, cafés welcome pets, and structured obedience training is widely encouraged. In these societies, we often integrate dogs into public life, and we expect them to behave in socially acceptable ways. As a result, we invest heavily in training, accessories, and pet-friendly infrastructure, which reinforces the visibility of dogs in everyday community spaces.

In Japan and many densely populated urban regions of Asia, however, housing design influences our choices differently. Smaller apartments and high-rise living often make cats a more practical option. We see a noticeable rise in indoor-only pets, especially cats, because they adapt well to compact environments and require less outdoor access. When space is limited but emotional connection is valued, we adjust by choosing animals whose needs align with our living conditions. Thus, architecture and urban planning directly shape our pet parenting culture.

In the Middle East, attitudes toward companion animals are evolving. While historical and religious perspectives have influenced how animals are perceived, modern urbanization and global exposure are reshaping these views. We now observe growing interest in pet adoption, veterinary services, and companion animal welfare. As societies modernize and younger generations embrace global lifestyles, traditional boundaries are gradually shifting, and pet parenting is becoming more visible and accepted.

In India, we are witnessing a rapid rise in urban pet parenting alongside expanding veterinary infrastructure and pet care services. Metropolitan cities are seeing more pet clinics, grooming centers, and specialty stores. However, cultural norms, religious beliefs, economic conditions, and housing patterns continue to influence our decisions. Because pet parenting sits at the intersection of tradition and modernity, we must recognize that our choices are rarely personal alone—they are shaped by the society in which we live.

## Key Points

Pet parenting varies globally.

### United States & Europe:

- Strong dog culture
- Pet-friendly parks and cafes
- Dog training widely emphasized

### Japan & Urban Asia:

- Smaller apartments favor cats
- Rise in indoor-only pets



## **Middle East:**

Changing attitudes toward companion animals

## **India:**

Growing urban pet parenting  
Rising veterinary infrastructure

Cultural norms, religious beliefs, housing design, and economic factors all influence pet choice.

# **Longevity and Long-Term Commitment**

When we decide to bring a pet into our lives, we are also stepping into a long-term commitment that spans many years. On average, dogs live between 10 to 13 years, depending largely on breed, size, and overall health. Cats, however, often live longer—typically between 12 to 18 years, and in some cases even beyond 20. These numbers are not just statistics; they represent a decade or more of shared routines, evolving bonds, and daily responsibility. When we choose a pet, we are choosing to care for a life that will depend on us consistently over time.

A longer lifespan naturally means extended responsibility. We must plan for different life stages—playful youth, mature adulthood, and eventually senior care. As pets age, their medical needs may increase, and we may need to adjust our homes, schedules, and finances to support them. This long arc of caregiving requires patience and foresight. It asks us to remain committed not just when companionship is easy and joyful, but also when it becomes medically or emotionally demanding.

We must also acknowledge the emotional reality that accompanies such deep attachment. Pet loss can be profoundly painful. Many of us experience grief that feels comparable to losing a family member, because in many ways, that is exactly what we have lost. Our pets witness our daily lives, our quiet moments, our celebrations, and our struggles. They become woven into our routines and memories. Choosing a pet, therefore, is not simply choosing companionship for today—it is choosing a long-term emotional investment that will shape our lives in meaningful and lasting ways.

## **Key Points**

Cats generally live longer than dogs.

- Dogs: 10–13 years (breed dependent)
- Cats: 12–18 years (sometimes over 20)

Longer lifespan means longer responsibility.

Pet loss is emotionally profound. Many pet parents describe grief comparable to losing a family member.



Choosing a pet is choosing long-term emotional investment.

## Ethical Considerations

Modern pet parenting goes beyond affection and daily care—it begins with ethical decision-making. Choosing to **adopt rather than shop** helps reduce the burden on overcrowded animal shelters and gives homeless animals a second chance at life. When purchasing from breeders, ensuring **responsible and humane breeding practices** is essential to prevent exploitation and genetic health problems. Ethical pet parents also prioritize **spaying and neutering**, which helps control overpopulation and reduces the number of abandoned animals. Equally important is avoiding **impulse buying**, as pets require long-term emotional, financial, and time commitments that can span 10–20 years or more.

Ethical awareness also includes considering the **environmental impact of pet ownership**, such as sustainable pet food choices, eco-friendly products, and responsible waste management. Every decision—from the source of adoption to daily care routines—reflects a broader responsibility toward animals, society, and the planet. Animal shelters worldwide remain overcrowded, often due to uninformed or impulsive decisions. Therefore, responsible pet parenting truly begins **before bringing a pet home**, with thoughtful reflection, preparation, and a commitment to lifelong care.

### Key Points

Modern pet parenting also involves ethical awareness.

Important considerations:

- Adopt vs shop
- Responsible breeding
- Spaying and neutering
- Avoiding impulse buying
- Environmental impact of pet products

Animal shelters worldwide remain overcrowded.

Responsible parenting begins before bringing a pet home.

## So... Cat or Dog?

The choice between a cat and a dog is not about superiority but **compatibility**. Your daily routine, available time, and lifestyle shape which animal will thrive with you. Dogs generally require structured involvement—regular walks, training, outdoor activity, and consistent human interaction. They suit people who enjoy movement, routine, and active engagement. Cats, by contrast, adapt well to quieter schedules and smaller spaces, offering companionship without constant supervision. Housing conditions and pet-



friendly policies also matter, as does financial readiness for food, healthcare, grooming, and emergencies.

Dogs tend to express affection openly and seek participation in your daily life, becoming companions in activity—walks, travel, play, and social interaction. Cats offer affection more subtly, rewarding patience and respect for boundaries, and they blend into the emotional tone of a home rather than its schedule. While their needs differ, both animals depend on responsible care, long-term commitment, and emotional presence. Ultimately, the right choice is the one that aligns with your capacity to provide stability, attention, and care—because both cats and dogs offer unconditional companionship when their needs are truly understood.

### **Key points**

The better question is not:

**“Which animal is better?”**

The better question is:

- What is your daily routine?
- How much time can you dedicate?
- Do you enjoy outdoor activity?
- Do you prefer expressive affection or quiet companionship?
- Is your housing pet-friendly?
- Are you financially prepared?

Dogs demand participation.

Cats reward patience.

Dogs integrate into your activity.

Cats integrate into your atmosphere.

Both require responsibility.

Both offer unconditional companionship.

## **Final Reflection**

Cat vs dog parenting is not about deciding which animal is better; it is about understanding which one aligns with your way of living. Your daily routine, energy level, housing space, emotional expectations, and long-term stability all influence the kind of companionship that will truly thrive in your home. An active person with time for walks and structured interaction may naturally connect with a dog’s expressive, participatory nature. Someone who values calm presence and quieter bonding may find harmony with a cat’s independent yet deeply affectionate temperament. The choice reflects who you are and how you live.



Regardless of whether your home is filled with playful barking or gentle purring, the responsibility remains equally profound. Pet parenting is a long-term commitment that demands patience, financial readiness, emotional consistency, and unwavering care through every life stage of the animal. It is not a temporary decision driven by trends or impulse, but a conscious promise to nurture, protect, and remain present for years. Choosing with awareness ensures that the bond you build is not only joyful, but also ethical and enduring.

### **Key Points**

Cat vs dog parenting is not a competition.

It is a reflection of:

- Lifestyle
- Personality
- Emotional needs
- Environment
- Commitment level

Whether your home echoes with barking joy or hums with quiet purring warmth, the essence remains the same: Pet parenting is a lifelong promise of care, compassion, and consistency.

**Choose not with impulse.**

**Choose with awareness.**

### **Key Words**

cat vs dog parenting, difference between cats and dogs as pets, pet parenting lifestyle comparison, dog parenting responsibilities, cat parenting guide, choosing between a cat or dog, emotional benefits of pets, pet ownership global trends, dog vs cat personality traits, pets and mental health benefits,

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