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Animal Collective

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Whether someone is walking a puppy down the street or someone is flaunting pictures of an adorable new chinchilla, pets are the ultimate source of entertainment. Aside from their fluffiness, playfulness and heart-warming cuteness, pets are personal undertakings that require more than just the T.L.C. their potential owners intend to give them. All pets require time, money and attention, though different animals’ needs vary. John Metcalf, co-owner of The Ark Pet Shop, sees many students in his store and says knowledge of a prospective pet is the best thing to have when deciding to own a pet or not. “You study for classes and tests, so do the same thing for the animal—give them that much respect,” says Metcalf. Here are four things Metcalf recommends considering if you’re looking to parent a pet.

ONE
Living situation
What kind of space do you have for your pet? Take the anticipated size of the full-grown pet into consideration and make sure it will have plenty of space. If you’ve got roommates, make sure to talk to them about bringing home a pet before it happens to keep everyone happy and the love flowing to the newest member of the household. Double-check your lease to ensure pets are allowed.

TWO
Free time
If you spend the majority of your day in lecture halls or a cubicle, animals that require attention, potty or obedience training may not be your best bet. Some pets need daily exercise, while others need their cages cleaned bi-monthly. Anxiety can strike pets like dogs, cats and rabbits if they’re left alone for too long, so make sure your schedule and pet are compatible. Don’t forget to account for weekend and break schedules as well. Traveling often or going out every night has serious implications for what kind of pet is best for you.

THREE
Post-graduation plans
Your parents shouldn’t be the only ones thinking about your post-graduation plans. If you’re planning to move in the immediate future, hold off on the pet owning. Your future career should also be a factor you consider; will you be working endlessly after graduation or doing freelance work from the comfort of your home?

FOUR
Cost
Aside from the up-front cost of buying a pet, be sure to research what the average monthly cost might be. Between food, equipment, toys, medications and trips to the veterinarian, pet expenses can add up quickly. Try talking to someone who owns or has owned the pet you’re looking into to get a fairly accurate estimate. If you had trouble coming up with last month’s rent, just imagine having to scrounge up cash when your furry friend needs fixing.