

T'was The Night Before Christmas,

when all through the house
not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
in the hopes that St.Nicholas soon would be there.

The children were nestled all snug in their beds
with no thought of the dog filling their head,
And mama in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
knew he was cold, but didn't care about that

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
figuring the dog was free of his chain and into the trash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
gave the luster of mid-day to the objects below
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear
but Santa Claus - with his eyes full of tears.

Santa unchained the dog, once so lively and quick
Last year's Christmas present, now painfully thin
and sick
More rapid than eagles he called the dogs name,
And the dog ran to him, despite all his pain.

"Now, Dasher, now Dancer now, Prancer and
Vixen On Comet! On Cupid! On Donner and
Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall!
Let's find this dog a home where he'll be loved by
all.

I knew in an instant there would be no gifts this
year,
for Santa Claus had made one thing quite clear
The gift of a dog is not just for the season,
we had gotten the pup for all the wrong reasons.

In our haste to think of a gift for the kids
there was one important thing that we missed.
A dog should be family, and cared for the same.
You don't give a gift, then put it on a chain.

And I heard him exclaim as he rode out of sight,
"You weren't giving a gift! You were giving a life!"

Adoption

Remember... Rescued animals make
great family members.

When the time is right, consider a
shelter pet as your next family
member... From puppies and kittens
to dogs and cats, even bunnies and
hamsters—many lovable animals are
awaiting a family of their own in
animal shelters.

**MAKE ADOPTION YOUR FIRST
OPTION.**

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www.petfinder.com.



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Pets are for
life.

Not just for
Christmas.



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Pets as gifts:



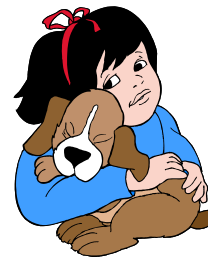
Nice sentiment, bad idea *or, "How to house train that new puppy in 2 feet of snow"*

Puppies and kittens are cute and endearing, especially all decked out in the "big red bow." But living animals should not be delivered in boxes or presented as gifts, especially surprise gifts. They are often unwelcome adolescents by the time the cuteness wears off, and the reality of house training, obedience training and spending vast amounts of time with the new pet sets in. Then they are dumped - in droves.

An "impulse" or "surprise" Christmas animal is very likely to be chained in the backyard, surrendered to a shelter or passed on in the New Year with excuses put forward to cover the fact that the animals were not "wanted" in the first place. The novelty simply wore off.

When the fun goes out of non-living gifts, they can be switched off, packed away or simply ignored. **Pets are not toys.** With a cat or a dog or a hamster or rabbit, *you're not giving a gift, you're giving a life.* You owe it to them to ensure it's a long, loved and healthy one.

Things to consider:



What about pets and kids?

Giving someone an unexpected living gift is never a good idea. It's unfair to the person who receives it and to the animal. Most children, to whom the "gift" is usually given, do not have the strength, attention span, self-discipline and physical strength to care for a dog or cat by themselves. So a parent becomes the primary caretaker, doing the feeding, walks, litter scooping and all of the other chores the children once promised to do themselves. That might be okay for a little while, but unless the adult was fully committed to the animal in the first place, resentment grows, and the gift puppy or kitten is usually given up within the first year or left to the backyard or basement, starved for training, socialization and affection.

But Grandma REALLY wants a pet!

Choosing a pet is an intensely personal matter. Your choice may please you but it may not be appropriate for the recipient. So even if you are sure someone is looking for a companion animal, don't make the choice for them. There are much better options for under their Christmas tree – books and videos on pet care, pet supplies, for example." Shelters frequently offer gift certificates too, and the lucky recipient can visit with shelter guests after Christmas as often as it takes them to fall in love with their new best friend.

When is the right time to get a pet?

To decide whether a new pet is right for you at any time of year, consider whether your family -

- *Really wants a pet? Will the pet get enough attention?*
- *Can afford the ongoing costs of a pet?*
- *Has enough room for a pet? If you are thinking of getting a dog, do you have a fenced yard?*
- *Is allowed to have a pet where you live? Will you have to pay a pet deposit?*
- *Has the time to properly care for a pet? Average time required for minimum daily care can range from 30 to 60 minutes for a cat to 1 hour or more for a dog.*

Please think about these things before bringing any new pet home, and make sure you and your family are ready. Proper planning and commitment – from all family members – is what makes for a successful pet adoption.

