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Every time you open Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, or practically any other millennial-centered media outlet, you will most likely encounter a montage of cute dog videos, cat memes, or “open for a surprise” pictures, and other animal-related content that causes a lot of us to have “animal fever.” Having an animal is especially enticing for the newly independent college student. The question is: are college students mature enough to own a pet?

A question like that is loaded, and there is not a definitive answer to it. Because of this, students must look inward and seriously evaluate themselves. Dog lover and owner Jackson Morefield said, “I think it takes a certain type of person willing to give up a lot of their time to take care of a dog. They also need to know how much it costs to have one. Other than that, having a dog in college is great. You have a best friend that will always be there when you get home after a stressful day.”

So many students get wrapped up in the fantasy of what owning a pet. Specifically, dogs are like, and they jump into getting one before seriously considering the reality of pet ownership. If you are considering owning a dog, or any other pet, think of the following: You have to pay for food, protective medication, shots, spaying/neutering, vet visits, and more. You have to devote the majority of your time because training a dog is time-consuming and challenging, and even after training, you cannot leave the dog in a cage for hours at a time. Consider your class schedule and factor in homework. (Do you study or do work on campus?), extra-curricular, events, and your social life. Are you ready to make a decade-long or more commitment? What about someone to care for your animal when you go away or are out for extended periods of time? These are only a few of the questions you should be asking yourself before getting an animal.

You have probably seen some dogs students bring on campus. You honestly cannot walk to class without passing one. Unfortunately, a lot of the dogs you see will be given away, sold, or taken to the shelter when breaks come. Radford Animal Shelter is swamped with animals when Thanksgiving, Christmas, Spring, and Summer breaks roll around. The dogs and cats

that are brought in are almost always from college students. Along with seeing all kinds of dogs on campus, you see, and hopefully not step in, dog feces everywhere. I went past Subway and saw some on the sidewalk next to the door to enter Tyler apartments! It is dangerous to leave dog feces because it is hazardous to other animals if they eat it, it is unsanitary, and it is contaminating Radford's water supply to the point where the university is considering dog waste stations with bags and disposal units. Please, pick up after your dog.

As a dog owner, I can say that it is complicated to try and juggle college life with caring for another living, breathing life. Owning a pet is not always fun or glamorous because once your dog diarrhea all over your rented textbook - true story on my part - you have to compose yourself enough not to have a mental breakdown and care for your sick animal. If you are fully prepared and have done your research, go for it. Do not get any animal unless you have seriously considered your patience, bank account, and personality. It is okay not to be responsible enough or ready for a dog. It is not okay to know this and get one anyway only to give it away after a short time. An animal is a living thing that can feel, and it is solely dependent on you as an owner. Remember that, take care of your animals if you have them, and be respectful of others by cleaning up after them. Only you can know if you truly are mature enough to own a pet.