Dogs were domesticated thousands of years ago and have been man’s companion for just as long. Over the centuries, dog have been bred to serve different purposes. They have worked alongside us as hunters, guardians and companions. Today you can still see the categories of these dogs in groupings by the American Kennel Club. The seven groups are: Toy, Hound, Sporting, Non-sporting, Working, Herding and Terrier.

The Toy Group includes dogs that are meant to be companions. Some examples are Pugs, Italian Greyhounds, Papillons, and Yorkshire Terriers. The Hound Group is dogs that have been bred to hunt by sight or scent. This includes Basset Hounds, Beagles, Blood Hounds, and Dachshunds. The Sporting Group are dogs that will hunt birds on land and in water. Some of the dogs in this group are Weimaraners, Vizslas, Brittanys, and Cocker Spaniels. As for the Non-Sporting Group, this is a combination group of dogs that are bred for different functions, including companions. Bulldogs, Dalmations and Shiba Inu’s all fit into this group. The Working Group of dogs has been bred to perform functions such as guarding property, pulling carts or even participating in search and rescue. Examples of some dogs in this group are the Siberian Husky, Saint Bernard, and the Mastiff. The Herding Group were bred to do just as the name implies, help ranchers take care of their livestock. Border Collies, Briards, and Collies all fall into this category. The Terrier Group is dogs that have been bred to hunt out vermin. Some examples are the West Highland White Terrier, Border Terrier or Miniature Schnauzer.

There are 178 different breeds recognized by the American Kennel Club and there are even more breeds than that out there, not including mixes! That means so many options of different types of dogs that you could add to your family. Before bringing one home, you should make sure to do plenty of research on the types of dogs that you’re interested in. Depending on your activity level, work schedule or commitment to grooming, there are dogs that may or not be a right fit for your lifestyle. Each of the breeds also comes with their own training challenges. Are you prepared for a dog who might nip at your heels or try to herd you if you were to bring a Border Collie home? Or would you be okay with a breed that’s not likely to be 100% house broken, like the Italian Greyhound? What about a dog that needs constant grooming, like the Shih Tzu, are you prepared to work with them to be comfortable getting brushed, combed and blow dried? When you get home after a long day of work, would you be interested in exercising a high energy dog like a Vizsla? These are only a few questions that you could ask yourself before bringing home any number of dogs.

There’s a lot to consider before adding a dog to the family, but the most important is to make sure it is a good match for both you and the pet. While all purebred dogs might not follow the breed standard’s description, it is not something to be ignored. Research and get out to meet some of the breeds when possible to see if it’s a type of dog that will fit in with your lifestyle. Training is important for all dogs, but by researching and getting familiar with a breed ahead of time, you’ll know what to expect and hopefully be better prepared for training. Dogs add something wonderful to our lives, just take the time to make sure you’re adding one to your life that is right for you and your family.