

DOG 27

Choosing the right breed



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Choosing the right breed

There are hundreds of breeds of dog in the world and our four-legged friends come in all shapes and sizes. And, like humans, they're all different.

Lots of people make the mistake of choosing a dog by appearance without doing any research into whether they'll be able to provide for the behavioural needs of that dog. Most dogs have been bred for a purpose and will still have natural instincts, whether it's guarding, hunting or herding. We hope this guide will help you learn a little more about the difference between dog breeds.

We're going to explore the seven groups that The Kennel Club divides breeds into. Don't forget that this is a rough guide and that the characteristics and natural instincts of dogs vary within each group, so if you're thinking of a particular breed make sure you do your homework first.

Other factors are also extremely important in shaping your dog's character – particularly the environment they were born in and raised as a puppy. So it's important that if you want your dog to live in your home as a family pet to choose a puppy that has been born and raised in a family home. For more information, see our pet care leaflet, *Choosing the right dog (D1)*.

Toy

In this group it's size that matters. These dogs are here because they're small but they're a mixed bag. Many have been bred as companions while others were intended for vermin control and need a job to keep them busy.



The key things to remember about this group is that these dogs can make great pets but tend to be high maintenance in their own way, whether that's because they need lots of grooming or lots of exercise. But one thing goes for all of these dogs – even though they're little, they still need to lead an active life and should be treated as dogs, not handbag accessories.

Popular toy breeds:

Cavalier King Charles spaniel: A happy and devoted companion who loves walks and sitting next to you by the fire.

Pug: A good-natured, sociable dog who likes to be part of the family.

Yorkshire terrier: A hardy dog with a strong hunting instinct who likes playing games. Needs lots of exercise and regular grooming.

Chinese crested: These dogs are affectionate but high maintenance and they can make great companions.

Chihuahua: A highly intelligent and easily trained companion. Needs a family that will make sure they get lots of exercise and training.

Utility

There's something for everybody in this group because it's got dogs of all shapes and sizes. The name utility means fit for purpose but that covers a whole range of dogs, from a little German spitz to a standard poodle, and this group is largely made up of dogs that don't fit into other groups.

Popular utility breeds:

Miniature schnauzer: A hardy and agile dog who is always alert and, due to their size, can make a popular pet for people living in towns.

Shih tzu: These little dogs are known for being outgoing and extrovert and can make great family pets. They need lots of grooming.

Lhasa apso: These dogs tend to be independent but, through training and play, you can build strong and loving relationships.

Bulldog: A courageous and affectionate dog who tends to be good-tempered with children and very endearing.

Shar pei: Originally bred for hunting or guarding, this dog often has guarding qualities but enjoys human company.



Terriers

Terriers were largely bred to hunt vermin so their natural instincts are to dig and kill. They are known for being extremely brave and tough and you can expect an intelligent, active dog that needs a job to do, which you can help provide through lots of exercise and play.

Popular terrier breeds:

Staffordshire bull terrier: Staffies have a reputation for courage and bravery. They love being around people and can make great family pets.

Border terrier: Bred as a worker, this dog has a good nature and needs to be part of an active family so they can keep busy.

West Highland white terrier:

A cheerful, outgoing dog who can make a great playmate for children. Always up for a walk, whatever the weather.

Bull terrier: A bit formidable to look at but bull terriers actually tend to be warm and friendly dogs who enjoy being around people.

Jack Russell terrier: A happy and lively dog who is very intelligent and needs a lot of exercise and play to stop boredom setting in.



Hound

Hounds are often described as aloof. This doesn't mean that they don't like companionship – in fact, they can become destructive when left at home alone – but they don't show their affection as much as some other dogs. They were bred to hunt and work at a distance from people so they're quite independent and some people find them harder to bond with.

Popular hound breeds:

Whippet: This speedy dog has a reputation for being gentle and affectionate and loves the company of humans.

Beagle: A bold and active dog who has a reputation for finding a scent and disappearing off for a chase.

Dachshund: A little dog who enjoys lots of exercise and, afterwards, a snooze on your lap. Loves to follow a scent and dig.

Rhodesian ridgeback: Bred to hold large prey at bay and used as guard dogs in their native country these dogs tend to love their family and are loyal and protective.

Basset hound: A popular and easygoing hound who likes getting muddy on active walks and then relaxing by a fire at home.





Working

This group is made up of dogs that were bred for a specific job. They tend to be larger dogs so this has to be taken into account if you're considering a working breed. They are highly intelligent and have large exercise requirements and many of them were bred to guard so they may still have this trait. Among the working breeds there are some gentle giants who, despite their large size, can make great family dogs provided they are well-trained, well-socialised and that they get enough exercise.

Popular working breeds:

Boxer: An outgoing and energetic dog who likes to join in the family fun and is very loyal.

Dogue de Bordeaux: Originally bred for hunting and fighting this dog, as all dogs, needs carefully structured training but often makes a loyal and affectionate pet.

Siberian husky: A boisterous dog who has a strong hunting instinct and needs lots of exercise. Friendly but needs specialist care and training.

Rottweiler: These dogs have a guarding instinct but are not aggressive by nature. They need lots of exercise and specialist knowledge.

Doberman: These dogs tend to fit into family life well and love going for long runs and spending time with their family.

Pastoral

These dogs have been bred to work with livestock and are very active and alert to their surroundings. They are extremely intelligent dogs that need to be physically and mentally stimulated and they tend to be quite tough and healthy. They need a job to do, which can be provided through plenty of training, play and exercise, otherwise they may become 'self-employed' and find their own jobs to do – including trashing your house and rounding up children, traffic and other dogs.

Popular pastoral breeds:

German shepherd dog: With an excellent reputation as a versatile worker this dog is highly intelligent and needs to be kept occupied.





Border collie: These dogs love being with humans but they need a job to do and must be mentally and physically stimulated.

Shetland sheepdog: An active and cheerful dog who tends to be affectionate with people they know and a little shy with strangers.

Rough collie: Originally bred as a herding dog, these are not just a pretty face – they need plenty of exercise and lots of grooming.

Smooth collie: A friendly, bold dog who, like all collies, has a herding instinct and needs to be kept busy with lots of exercise.

Gundog

These dogs were originally bred to find and retrieve game. They tend to have very amenable temperaments so they make popular family pets. They have long worked alongside people so they are often affectionate. They are active and intelligent dogs so they'll need lots of exercise to keep them busy.

Popular gundog breeds:

Labrador retriever: Often considered to be one of the best all-round dogs. A popular and energetic family pet who adores children.

Cocker spaniel: An affectionate and intelligent dog who tends to be easy to train and likes to keep busy.

English springer spaniel: A cheerful and energetic dog who can make a good pet for active families.

Golden retriever: A great all-round dog who tends to make a fun, affectionate and energetic member of the family.

Weimaraner: A multipurpose dog who used to be known for being a bit aloof but is fast becoming a popular companion.

Crossbreeds

There are lots of dogs who don't fit neatly into any of these groups because they're crossbreeds or mongrels. These dogs tend to lack the exaggerated behaviour traits associated with certain breeds and can make great pets.

However, be careful of so-called designer breeds because these experiments don't always work and can cause health problems in later life, as well as encouraging bad breeding practice as some unscrupulous breeders try to cash in on the fad.

Happy, healthy pets

Blue Cross advice leaflets are packed full of top tips to help owners with their pet questions. They cover a wide range of topics, from training a puppy to caring for an older cat. So if you need some support to help you with a pet problem, whether it's about a dog or a degu, we're here for you.

You can read and download our leaflets online at www.bluecross.org.uk

Visit our website to take advantage of all its features, including:

- blog posts from Blue Cross experts
- latest news
- events near you
- pets needing new homes

Or you can join in the chat on our online communities:

 www.facebook.com/thebluecrossuk

 www.twitter.com/the_blue_cross

Blue Cross

Blue Cross has been dedicated to the health and happiness of pets since 1897. Abandoned or unwanted, ill or injured – we do what's needed to give every pet a healthy life in a happy home. We're a charity, so the more help you give us, the more help we can give pets.

How you can help

Blue Cross doesn't receive any government funding, so we rely on the generosity of pet lovers like you. There are lots of ways you can help the sick, injured and abandoned pets in our care, like making a donation, fundraising for us or leaving us a legacy.

Please call us on 0300 777 1897 or visit www.bluecross.org.uk



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