

DOG BREED CHARACTERISTICS & BEHAVIOR

The following are some general behavioral attributes of different breed types. These are not meant to be rules of behavior. All dogs are individuals and have their own personality. This information may be useful when choosing a dog, or understanding its behavior.

...PROTECTION DOGS...

Most protection dogs were bred originally as herding dogs or flock guards. We now use them for a variety of purposes, including police work, guarding homes or property, or for specific leisure activities or sports, such as Schutzhund work.

- **BREEDS INCLUDE:** Akita, Rottweiler, Doberman pinscher, Bull Mastiff and Mastiff, Great Dane, Boxer and Giant Schnauzer. German Shepherd is included in this group as well as the herding group the Rhodesian Ridgeback is used as a combination guard, protection and hunting dog.
- **TYPICAL BEHAVIORAL PROFILE:** Confident, dominant, extremely trainable, ability to work well with humans
- **TYPICAL PROBLEMS:** Dominant aggression, separation anxiety, possessiveness

...FLOCKING DOGS & MOUNTAIN DOGS...

Flock guards were bred to protect their herds of sheep or cattle from marauding predators. Many of them were bred to be white, so they would blend into the flocks. They tend to be quite protective of their families and fear very little. The most well known in this country are the Great Pyrenees, Komondor, and Kuvasz. Closely related to the flock guards are the Mountain Dogs - St. Bernards, Newfoundland and Bernese Mountain Dogs. Also quite heavy-boned, with large, domed heads, these animals tend to be sweet-tempered, if stubborn.

- **TYPICAL BEHAVIORAL PROFILE:** Confident, dominant, protective, independent, tolerant, ability to work well with humans.
- **TYPICAL PROBLEMS:** Dominant aggression, wanderlust, possessiveness.

...HERDING BREEDS...

It's thought by some that herding dogs retain more "wolf" behaviors than any other type of dog except the Northern Breeds. This is because they stalk and chase (herd) on a regular basis. Herding breeds are used to herd sheep and cattle. They are often flock protectors as well. They are usually medium sized, agile, sensitive, and quick to use their teeth to move their flock.

- **BREEDS INCLUDE:** Border Collie, Collie, Old English Sheepdog, German Shepherd, Belgian Shepherd (3 varieties), Australian Shepherd, Heeler or Cattle dog, Kelpie, Corgie and Shetland Sheepdog, Puli, Bearded Collie and Bouvier.
- **TYPICAL BEHAVIORAL PROFILE:** Anxious, demanding, dominant, protective, sensitive, loyal, great obedience dogs, ability to work well with humans
- **TYPICAL PROBLEMS:** Fear-based aggression, separation anxiety, destructive, noisy

...RETRIEVERS...

Retrievers retrieve - whether in water, on land or in the air. Most retrievers are “party animals,” good natured, outgoing and very energetic. People have bred specifically for particular aspects of the wolf’s prey drive - the chase, and bringing the prey back to the den. In addition, these dogs need to be submissive enough to give their possessions to their owners.

- **BREEDS INCLUDE:** Flat Coated Retriever, Golden Retriever, Curly Coated Retriever, Chesapeake Bay Retriever. Chesapeake Bay Retrievers are not usually as friendly and outgoing as the rest of the retrievers, and in fact, can be quite aggressive, since they were also used to guard property.
- **TYPICAL BEHAVIORAL PROFILE:** Energetic, dominant, happy, mouthy, ball or Frisbee oriented, vocal, great obedience dogs, ability to work well with humans
- **TYPICAL PROBLEMS:** Destructive, noisy, mouthy during puppy stage, overwhelmingly energetic, separation anxiety, occasionally escape orientation or wanderlust, possessive

...SPANIELS...

The word Spaniel derives from the word “Spain.” and indeed some of the group did come from that country. Spaniels are hunting dogs, bred to flush or “spring” game from bushes. They are conveniently sized for pets, and are quite popular because of that. Dogs bred for pets only generally have lots of hair - or feathering - on their ears and legs.

- **BREEDS INCLUDE:** American Water, Clumber, Cocker, English Cocker, English Springer, English Toy, Field, Irish Water, Japanese Chin, Sussex, Tibetan and Welsh
- **TYPICAL BEHAVIOR PROFILE:** Cheerful, fun-loving, energetic, “birdy,” love to fetch
- **TYPICAL PROBLEMS:** Possession, unruliness, destructiveness, mouthy. A behavioral problem known as “rage syndrome” (thought to be a form of dominant aggression or possibly conflict behavior) is prevalent in some strains of Cockers and Springers. The behavior is characterized by attacking and biting, with no apparent provocation.

...COMPANION DOGS...

Companion dogs are essentially a mixed canine bag, ranging from the Dalmatian to the Lhasa Apso. They don’t quite fit in anywhere else. The poodle was originally a water hunting dog, the English Bulldog a sporting dog (if you call Bull baiting a sport), the Keeshond and Schipperke were barge companions, the Tibetan Terrier and Lhasa Apso guard dogs with some herding thrown in, and Boston Terrier a companion.

Their temperaments are just as varied as their looks.

- **TYPICAL BEHAVIORAL PROFILE:** Varies from breed to breed
- **TYPICAL PROBLEMS:** Dalmatians can be dog and people aggressive, and need vast amounts of exercise. The Schipperke is very dominant, often dominant aggressive, the Boston Terrier is feisty and independent, and the Poodle often has separation anxiety and vocal problems.

...POINTERS AND SETTERS...

Pointers are highly energetic with normally happy temperaments and tolerant dispositions. The Dalmatian was originally a pointing variety, but retains little of the temperament except for the energy.

Setters are also hunting dogs, often with a more sensitive or nervous disposition. The Irish Setter lost a lot of behavioral ground when it was over bred several years ago.

- **BREEDS INCLUDE:** German Shorthair, Wirehaired and English Pointers, the Irish, English, and Gordon Setters.
- **TYPICAL BEHAVIORAL PROFILE:** Both types are energetic, often nervous, though most have sweet temperaments. Good with children, though not in the obedience ring.
- **TYPICAL PROBLEMS:** Running away, disobedience, destructiveness

...FIGHTING DOGS...

While the tendency to fight has been bred out of many of these dogs, it remains in others — either accidentally or purposefully. Much of their aggression comes from their prey-drive, so it is not driven by emotion. Thus, with tails wagging, fighting dogs appear to enjoy the fight. Most are very stubborn and independent. They are usually extremely bonded and affectionate with their owners, and the sound ones make great dogs for children.

- **BREEDS INCLUDE:** Sharpei, Pit Bull Terrier, Bull Terrier, Staffordshire and Staffordshire Bull Terrier, and Akita
- **TYPICAL BEHAVIORAL PROFILE:** Lively, affectionate, bonded, predatory, very focused
- **TYPICAL PROBLEMS:** Untrustworthy with other dogs or other animals, occasionally aggressive towards humans

...SCENT HOUNDS...

Scent Hounds are master smellers, in a species with an absolutely amazing ability to smell. Most Scent hounds have long ears - in Bloodhounds and Bassets, so long that the ears sometimes scrape the ground and stir up even more scents.

- **BREEDS INCLUDE:** Beagles, basset, Otter, Coon
- **TYPICAL BEHAVIORAL PROFILE:** Sweet tempered and tolerant, excellent for families. Rarely bite.
- **TYPICAL PROBLEMS:** Wanderlust, occasional dominance aggression, indifference to training

...SIGHT HOUNDS...

Sight hound are typically long and lean, sometimes virtually disappearing when looked down upon from above. They have keen vision, and can run miles without tiring. Most were or are used to course prey — including everything from rabbits to deer to wolves.

- BREEDS INCLUDE: Afghan, Saluki, Ibizan, Pharaoh, Greyhound, whippet, Italian Greyhound
- TYPICAL BEHAVIORAL PROFILE: Reserved, sometimes shy, aloof, gentle, quiet when they're not running after something.
- TYPICAL PROBLEMS: Predatory to small animals, many are not interested in obedience work, so have earned the reputation of being stubborn and stupid, which they are not.

...NORTHERN BREEDS...

These dogs are beautiful, and often look like wolves (they are also used often in breeding Wolf Hybrids). A working Malamute can pull up to a ton for a short distance, while Huskies specialize in long treks. Samoyeds are all round sled dogs. American Eskimos are bred down sled dogs (as are Pomeranians). Thick double coat, sheds dirt.

- BREEDS INCLUDE: Alaskan Malamute, Siberian Husky, Samoyeds, American Eskimo, Norwegian Elkhound, Finnish Spitz, American Husky, Pomeranian (Akita and Chow Chow also could fall into this group)
- TYPICAL BEHAVIORAL PROFILE: Many are very independent, and have a tendency to roam if not adequately fenced. Predatory. Often quite tolerant of pain (like that delivered by a small child)
- TYPICAL PROBLEMS: Wandering, killing small animals, difficult to obedience train, dominance possession aggression.

...TERRIERS...

Small to medium sized dogs (one large - the Airedale), bred to chase after and kill vermin or to be the participants in dog fighting or bull baiting. Very hardy, as a rule, many with harsh, wiry coats that need little conditioning. Virtually all hail from various parts of the British Islands.

- BREEDS INCLUDE: Airedale, Australian, Bedlington, Border, Boston, Bull, Cairn, Dandie Dinmont, Irish, Kerry Blue, Lakeland, Manchester, Norfolk, Norwich, Scottish, Sealyham, Silky, Skye, Smooth Fox, Soft-Coated Wheaten, Tibetan, Toy Fox, Toy Manchester, Welsh, West Highland White, Wire Fox, Yorkshire...and Jack Russell. I do include Miniature Schnauzers and Dachshunds in this group, because they share the disposition.
- TYPICAL BEHAVIORAL PROFILE: Scrappy, energetic, independent, often predatory, hardy and fun describes most terriers. They can be quite dominant, and are often poor pets for kids because of their low bite inhibition. The short legged variety tend to get on better with other dogs than the longer legged types, though this is a very broad generalization.
- TYPICAL PROBLEMS: Snappy, independent, dog-aggressive, dominant-aggressive, the smaller ones have trouble with house training.

...TOYS...

Most of these little guys take on the breed characteristics of their larger cousins, with a few twists. Because they're so tiny, they can often be quite snappy, no matter what breed they were bred down from, and they develop their own specific behavior problems — especially a dislike of being put on the ground!

- BREEDS INCLUDE: Affenpinscher, Brussels Griffon, Chihuahua, English Toy Spaniel, Italian Greyhound, Japanese Chin, Maltese, Toy Manchester Terrier, Miniature Pinscher, Papillion, Pekinese, Pomeranian, Toy Poodle, Pug, Shih Tzu, Silky and Yorkshire Terriers
- TYPICAL BEHAVIORAL PROFILE: Type specific, except that they tend to be vocal.
- TYPICAL PROBLEMS: Snappy, vocal, shy, separation anxiety, dominance aggression.