

Choosing a Dog to

Suit Your Lifestyle

Breed Considerations

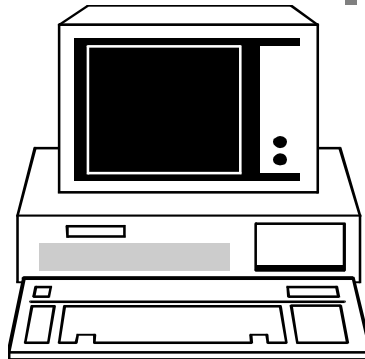
For ease of comparison it is best to divide breeds into size categories:

Giant Breeds

Among these, the Burnese Mountain Dog, Deer Hound, Great Dane, Wolfhound, Mastiff, Newfoundland and Pyrenean. Weights range from 35 to 100 kilograms. Despite the size these are not generally dogs that require a vast amount of exercise, but they do obviously best suit larger homes. Their size can lead to various health problems particularly of their bones and joints. Lameness whilst growing is common and skeletal deformities such as hip dysplasia (H D) are not rare. Lifespan of this group is the shortest, some breeds barely reaching 10 years of age. Old dogs may lose mobility so best not to have to go up and down stairs. Temperament of this group is generally very good, making them suitable for families with the children. Naturally they represent the greatest cost of keeping, not only on food requirement but kennelling, the dosages of drugs needed, grooming and insurance.

Large Breeds

This group includes the Boxer, Dalmation, Doberman German Shepherd, Greyhound, Labrador, Old English Sheep Dog, Standard Poodle, Setters, Pointers, Retrievers, Rottweiler, Rough Collie and Weimaraner. Weights range from 25 to 50 kg. These are generally more energetic dogs, originally bred



for working as guards, game or sheep dogs. They need regular exercise daily, ideally being taken to open spaces for off-the-lead running. These are not ideal dogs for smaller flats.

They are also prone to some inherited defects, notably hip dysplasia (HD), osteochondrosis (OCD, another joint disease), and certain eye problems. Many of these breeds are in the kennel club hip and eye schemes. Check whether parents should be certificated and do not take their pups if they are not. Life span is longer than the previous group, mid-teens being usual.

Temperament is rather more variable. Some breeds such as the Labrador, Doberman and Standard Poodle are pretty reliable, others have incidents of aggression or skittishness. This may make some unsuitable for families with young children.

Medium Breeds

This group includes the Bassett, Collies, the Bull breeds, the larger Spaniels, Keeshound, Schnauzer, Shar Pei, and Husky. Weights range between 15 and 30 kilos. There are a number of working dogs in the group that require a lot of exercise, notably the spaniels. Others still benefit from regular visits to the park to exercise and are probably best in a large apartment.

The smaller size makes the occurrence of inherited skeletal problems less common, although larger members such as the Flat Coated Retrievers and Water Spaniels may show OCD and H D. The brachycephalic (short nosed) dogs such as the bull dog exhibit various respiratory problems associated with poor airway formation. The Shar Pei is notable for its skin and eyelid problems.

Generally temperament is good, most dogs being good with families. The bull breeds on known for their dislike of fellow dogs, which can make walks trying.

Active Working dogs need a lot of exercise. Even in winter. Have you got the time?

Small Breeds

Probably the largest popular group, weighing between six and 12 kilos. It includes the Beagle, Cavalier King Charles spaniels, Daschund, Lhasa Apso, Miniature Poodle, Schnauzer, Pug, Shetland Sheep Dog, Shih Tzu, Tibetan Spaniel and all sorts of Terrier (Bedlington, Border, Jack Russell, Norfolk, Norwich, Scottish, Tibetan, West Highland).

The size of these dogs makes them ideal for the smaller home or flat. They still require exercise but nothing like that of the larger breeds - after all a room is relatively larger and the home provides a fair share of the daily exercise. Walks in the park are of course always enjoyed but a garden may provide a suitable alternative.

Inherited problems within the group are less common and rather more varied - heart valve leakage in the Cavalier, back problems of the Daschund, respiratory problems of the Pug, allergic skin disease of the Westie to name a few.

Temperament is against generally good, the terrier has a reputation for some snappiness particularly with other dogs (not to mention CATS). The Cavalier is probably always good-natured and therefore particularly good with children whereas the Scottish and Fox terriers are not so reliable. Border, Norfolk and Norwich terriers are usually good natured.

It is not surprising that this group is the most popular for today's urban life. It is not essential to go out for long walks daily, feeding is relatively inexpensive, inherited problems relatively uncommon.

In the end the most important feature of any pet is temperament. A dog that has appealing looks but that you cannot trust wont benefit the family.

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Toy Breeds

These are the smallest group weighing between 2 and 5 kg and include the Bichon Frise, Chihuahua Papillon, Pekinese, Pomeranian, Toy Poodle and Yorkshire Terrier. The small size makes them suitable for any home. They need little taking out for walks (although always enjoyed) as the home can provide space for much of their exercise.

There are few inherited problems within the group, mainly related to size, the knee joints are prone to knee cap dislocation in all breeds, the Yorkie can have poor windpipe conformation and the Chihuahua can have skull abnormalities.

Temperament within the group is variable with nervousness being common. This may lead to poor appetite and snappiness if threatened.

Larger members of the group such as the Bichon and some Yorkies make very suitable all-round City dogs.

Finding your puppy

Having chosen your breed, the next stage is to find a puppy. This is best achieved from the published lists of Breeders obtainable from the Kennels Club (Tel. 01714936651) or Pet Plan's Puppy Line (0897 223322). As a second best, local newspapers may advertise litters for sale, but if these are pedigree ensure the pups are Kennel Club registered. Pet shops provide a ready source of puppies, sometimes from dealers which may source from puppy farms. Such dogs have been stressed in travelling, may be unvaccinated and represent a greater health risk. You may choose a dog from a re-homing center, probably not a puppy. Be careful temperament was not the cause of re-homing.

Choosing from the litter

Not easy! But a few points - dogs may be more dominant than bitches - important for the Large breeds especially if you are not strong yourself. Dogs of the small breeds may exhibit unacceptable levels off territorial behaviour, particularly urinating, requiring castration. Females, on the other hand, are best neutered routinely to prevent uterine problems, mammary problems and the problems associated with managing a dog on heat.

Choose a pup that is neither too forward nor too shy, one that is neither bullying nor being bullied. Ideally see both parents to judge their temperament. Do not take a pup if neither parent is available. Check all certification for authenticity - do not accept it being sent on to you.

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Choosing a cat

For those that appreciate cats the relatively small amount of space dedicated to choosing a cat speaks volumes-it's much easier! No considerations as to size and suitability exercise or diet. There are some other considerations however, mainly on maintenance – longhairs are relatively high maintenance cats. Grooming may take time, needs to be repeated frequently and may be resented by your pet. Many a long hair needs regular tranquillisation to be dematted leaving them a rather moth eaten appearance until the coat grows again.

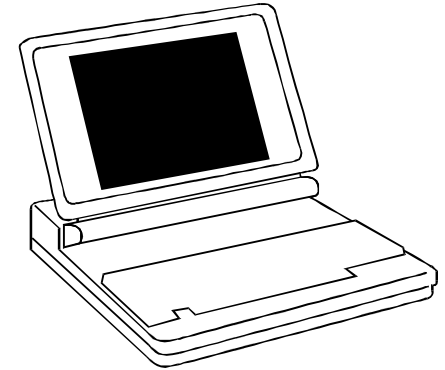
The oriental breeds of cat have some canine behaviour - they will retrieve objects and are more trainable. The Burmese is known for its wonderful temperament (not always with other cats). There are many newer breeds appearing including the Maine Coon, the Rag Doll and the Bengal and there are many old breeds getting more popular by import such as the Turkish van.

In the end choosing a cat often comes down to appearance and the range of colours and points is vast.

One final consideration for any cat is whether to let it out side or not. If you live on a busy road that your cat can get to, it is probably better kept in. If it is to be left alone all day, consider getting two cats for company. It is better to be kept inside a nice home than be allowed out to be run over.

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Choosing a Pet for your Family



Hamilton Pet Clinic
110 Boundary Road
St. John's Wood NW8 020 7722 3381

Park Pet Clinic
116 Regents Park Road
Finchley N3 020 8343 1433

Primrose Hill Pet Clinic
138 Gloucester Avenue
NW1 020 7586 8806

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