

Best dogs for first time owners

Thinking of bringing a dog into your life for the first time? Being a first time dog owner is a big deal! It's an exciting process to settle on the breed you feel will work best for you and your family, but it can also be daunting.

Of course, there's the question of which breed best fits your lifestyle. Your ideal dog may be active and outdoors-focused, a comfort-focused lap dog or somewhere in between. But there are other factors to weigh into the big decision - temperament toward other pets and health challenges, to name but two.

If you're currently dealing with this dire doggy dilemma, then this guide is for you! We'll give you a run-down of five of the **best dogs for first time owners**, looking at their temperament, their ideal home environment and health issues you should be aware of.

Yorkshire Terrier

Let's get the ball rolling with one of the best small dogs for first time owners.

The [Yorkshire Terrier](#) (affectionately known as the 'Yorkie') was first recognized as a distinct breed in England in the mid-1800s. Bred to help farmers deal with rats, these indomitable little dogs were renowned for their fearlessness, enthusiasm and an all-conquering self confidence.

They quickly found their way from the barn to the living room, becoming much-loved family pets. Today they're one of the most sought-after breeds in the world and are ranked 9th most popular dog by the AKC.

An "all-rounder" with an adorably large personality

If you're looking for a small dog with a personality which can fill a room, the Yorkie is definitely going to fit the bill. These diminutive dogs have the mellow confidence to live happily alongside cats and will eagerly strut their stuff with larger dogs when the opportunity presents itself.

They're moderate energy dogs and basic exercise (daily 15 minute walks and play) will keep them happy and settled.

If you have young kids, you'll need to pay close attention early on to socializing your Yorkie to play nice. It's also a good idea to make sure they get plenty of exposure to visitors early in life.

Yorkies are great for first time dog owners, especially for families seeking an adaptable, loyal and endlessly entertaining home dog, brimming with the confidence of an extroverted rhinoceros.

Health problems

The Yorkie is a generally a healthy dog with only a few health concerns of note.

[Tracheal collapse](#) (a breathing condition) and [progressive retinal atrophy](#) (a degenerative condition affecting eyesight) are conditions to look out for.

On the muscular skeletal front, it's also worth checking on [luxating patella](#) (a congenital condition affecting the kneecap) and [legg-calve-perthes](#) (a rare, degenerative hip condition).

Checking with breeders on the health of the puppy's parents and regular check-ups with the vet are advised.

Labrador Retriever

No list of **best dogs for first time owners** would be complete without the kind-hearted Lab.

The [Labrador Retriever](#) was the hunting-dog of choice of the English aristocracy in the early 1900s. Bred to be intelligent, neither aggressive nor shy and robust enough to handle tough conditions, the Lab made the perfect hunting dog.

Labs were bred to form close and enduring relationships with their owner and that trait remains one of their strongest characteristics to this day.

The ultimate family dog

The Labrador Retriever is especially suited to active families seeking a medium to large sized dog. The lab possesses several great traits which make them an excellent choice for first time owners.

Firstly, Labrador Retrievers are prodigiously smart. In fact they're ranked as the [seventh most intelligent](#) dog breed. Coupled with their natural "team-player" demeanor, Labs are typically very easy to train.

They're also great with kids, and owners are unlikely to have much trouble socializing them to get on well with other pets. They're particularly good at forming friendships with cats, showing a healthy respect for their sharp-clawed and cantankerous cousins.

Labradors can be excitable, especially as puppies. While they will require a solid level of exercise to keep them happy, they're generally thought of as being energetic dogs, but not overwhelmingly so.

Health problems

You will need to watch a Labrador Retriever's weight. They have a tendency to overeat and this can cause obesity and other complications later in life.

[Hip and elbow dysplasia](#) are your most important health screening priorities. It's important to check with breeders to confirm that the puppy's parents are free of these conditions.

[Progressive retinal atrophy](#) is another lab health concern which can easily be [tested for](#).

[Ear infections](#) are also a relatively common ailment to be mindful of.

For more information on Labrador Retriever health concerns, [click here](#).

Bichon Frise

The [Bichon Frise](#) found its way to France sometime in the 14th Century, when French soldiers brought these diminutive, fluffy dogs home from The Canary Islands.

Equally at home as a traveling pet for sailors or as lapdogs for French nobility, these undeniably cute dogs found an enduring niche as versatile and affable human companions.

The traveller's perfect cheerful buddy

One of the [best dogs for first time owners](#), the Bichon Frise possesses a unique line-up of traits and are actually quite unusual dogs. They have a mischievously hedonistic streak which makes them almost seem catlike. However, they're also intensely loyal and are all about family. The result is a cheerful little fluff ball who brings fun to any room.

Bichon Frise have a long heritage as a traveling dog. They adore seeing the world, making them a great fit for individuals or families who are frequently on the road.

These loving little dogs do form very close attachments with their owners and can experience separation anxiety if left alone for too long. They're at their happiest when they're in the thick of family events.

Health problems

To avoid skin and fur problems, you'll need to keep a Bichon Frise well groomed. Three times a week is generally advised, although you can keep their fur short, significantly reducing upkeep.

[Patellar luxation and hip dysplasia](#) are potential health issues to screen for and you should check that the puppy's parents have a clean bill of joint health.

[Juvenile cataracts](#) may occur in this breed and should be screened for at an early age.

Labradoodle

The [Labradoodle](#) is a designer breed, meaning it's a cross from two purebreds (a Labrador Retriever and a Poodle).

This breed is very young as far as breeds go. Created in the late 1980s the Labradoodle was bred to be an intelligent service dog that had the added benefit of being more hypoallergenic than its Labrador or Poodle parent breeds.

An extremely intelligent and allergy-friendly family dog

While it's important to note that designer breeds are more varied in temperament than purebred dogs, Labradoodles typically possess the resolute friendliness of a Labrador with the stable, even-tempered intelligence of a Poodle.

This is a breed that would be ideal for a family who love being outdoors. Labradoodles love to run and are happiest when you can keep them actively challenged.

Labradoodles are also generally considered easygoing dogs that get along well with small children and other pets.

Health problems

To learn more about designer breed health challenges generally, [this is a good resource](#).

You should ensure that you only work with reputable breeders when searching for your Labradoodle puppy.

Generally healthy dogs, you'll nevertheless want to check with the breeder for hip and elbow dysplasia as well as [pattelar luxation](#) in the puppy's parents.

Whippet

Most people know that the [Whippet](#) was bred from the English Greyhound. However, fewer know that the Whippet was bred to have a different set of traits to its larger hunting parent breed.

The Whippet, like the Greyhound, made its name as a renowned hunter, capable of chasing down rabbits, hares and other small animals with ease.

However, the Whippet was also bred to be a friendly, easy-going family dog and these traits are very evident today in this breed's temperament.

An elite athlete with a loyal and home-loving streak

Out of the **best dogs for first time owners**, the Whippet definitely stands out as the athlete of the pack!

The Whippet is a quiet, extremely loyal dog who develops a strong bond with its family. Most Whippets develop a particularly powerful bond with one human, whom it considers to be its primary owner and attachment.

The Whippet is a fantastic dog for families who want an all-rounder dog with a strongly athletic streak. These dogs are fast and tireless and amazing to watch in full flight. They're just as comfortable though curled up on the couch with their head in their owner's lap.

Whippets are not a good choice for homes with cats or other small pets. Their prey drive is very strong and it's almost impossible to condition a Whippet not to pursue that chasing instinct.

Health problems

Whippets can develop [Von Willebrand's Disease](#), a congenital blood disorder which disrupts the clotting process. They're also susceptible to eye diseases. Be sure that breeders present eye certificates of both parents.

Buying a dog for the first time is exciting, but it can be daunting. These **best dogs for first time owners** are a great place to start your search. As always, the best approach in finding your perfect companion is to take your time, do your research and spend time getting to know the breeders.

Good luck!

Sources

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