

Gordon Setter vs Irish Setter

So you've been on the hunt for a big dog to join your family and you've decided it's a matter of [Gordon Setter vs Irish Setter](#).

At first glance, these dogs seem very alike—both in their appearance and in their general temperament. After all, with their hunting dog pedigrees, both [Gordon Setters](#) and [Irish Setters](#) have that same alert athleticism, fierce loyalty and hunger for exercise.

It can be tough to make a call on which of these breeds will best fit your family.

But don't worry! You're in the right place. In this guide, we'll give you the key information you need to decide if a [Gordon Setter or Irish Setter](#) is the best fit for you, looking at their physical features, their temperament and their general health.

Physical differences of the [Gordon Setter vs Irish Setter](#)

It's stating the obvious to say that these are both strikingly large, distinctively noticeable dogs. There are, however, subtle differences in their size and physiology.

Size

The [Gordon Setter](#) is a slightly more muscular and slightly shorter dog, weighing in at around 75 to 80 pounds and standing 23 to 27 inches tall.

The [Irish Setter](#) is a touch lankier and longer boned, typically weighing a slightly less 65 to 75 pounds and standing 26 to 28 inches tall.

Shape

Both dogs are "long" in appearance. Everything about them, from the length of their facial features to their long limbs and undulating, feathered fur gives the impression of length.

The Gordon Setter's musculature leans toward endurance, with a burly chest and a touch more muscle bulk in its legs. The Irish Setter is more slight-boned and narrower, making it appear more elongated.

Coat

In looking at the coats of **Gordon Setters vs Irish Setters**, there are obvious similarities. Both are moderately shedding dogs. Weekly grooming and ear-cleaning is important and both Setters will benefit from monthly bathing.

The Gordon Setter is black with tan markings and its fur has a thickness to it. For this reason, shedding is quite visible.

The Irish Setter by contrast has finer fur and of course its coat is that famous, warm, russet red. Because the fur is so fine, grooming can be a little more work with an Irish Setter.

Gordon Setter vs Irish Setter Temperament

When it comes to temperament, the differences between **Gordon Setters vs Irish Setters** is interesting. Clearly these dogs are cut from the same cloth. However, there are some basic differences with big impacts on the kinds of family to which they're suited.

General temperament

Gordon Setters and Irish Setters are equally loyal, family-focused, energetic and predisposed to forming close emotional bonds with their humans.

The Gordon Setter leans toward being more alert and a little more aggressive. When a Gordon Setter meets strangers, it can be reserved at first.

It can also be socialized to be extremely gentle and loving with small kids. It has a natural tendency to be careful and aware of its strength.

The same can't be said for a Gordon Setter's attitude toward other pets! It has a strong prey drive, so it's not a great dog for cat homes. You'll also need to be especially vigilant when introducing a Gordon Setter to new dogs.

The Irish Setter by contrast is more excitable, more energetic and a generally more sociable dog than the Gordon Setter. It's a breed which loves the limelight and gets a kick out making new friends.

While the Irish Setter loves kids, it can become a little enthusiastic and not know its strength! For this reason, it's not an ideal dog for families with small children.

With the right socialization when young, you're much more likely to train an Irish Setter to get along well with other dogs and small animals.

Intelligence

Both dogs are quick learners, hard workers and like to be useful.

The Gordon Setter has a more pronounced “social intelligence.” It wants to hang out with its owners a lot and is adept at adapting well to home life.

The Irish Setter’s intelligence leans a little more toward mischief! They need mental stimulation to stay happy and if they aren’t given it, there’s a very good chance they’ll wander off to find their own fun.

Training

With **Gordon Setters or Irish Setters** alike, you’ll need to start training young. They both have a stubborn kind of intelligence, which means it’s a good idea to find challenging ways to push their boundaries.

The Gordon Setter has stronger hunting instincts and can also be a little more sensitive to correction. This is a dog you’ll need to “meet halfway” at times. As such, they’re more suited to dog owners who have some experience with training.

The key to training an Irish Setter is to get past that mischievous streak. Generally, they’re easier to train because they’re less aggressive and it’s easier to work with their natural desire to please.

Exercise requirement

Both **Gordon Setters and Irish Setters** will need exercise and plenty of it. They’re breeds best suited to an active family.

The Gordon Setter is generally a little more happy to relax at home, whereas the Irish Setter is going to be happiest with exercise or play at least twice a day.

Health problems: **Gordon Setter vs Irish Setter**

When it comes to **Gordon Setters or Irish Setters**, you’ll encounter many of the same health issues. Here are the breeds’ shared health conditions:

Gastric torsion: Also known as bloat this is a serious condition, [common among large dogs](#).

[Hip and elbow dysplasia](#): A congenital joint condition causing pain and lameness in certain large dogs.

[Progressive retinal atrophy](#): A degenerative eye condition known to affect both [Gordon Setters](#) and [Irish Setters](#).

[Hypothyroidism](#): Impaired production and secretion within the thyroid gland, also prevalent among [Gordon Setters](#) and [Irish Setters](#).

Gordon Setters are also known to suffer from [cerebellar abiotrophy](#), a brain condition in which cells in the cerebellum die, causing gradual neurological degeneration.

Irish Setters may experience [hypertrophic osteodystrophy](#), (which can cause lameness) and [epilepsy](#) (which can cause seizures.)

For more information on health conditions in Irish Setters, check out [this link](#) on the Happy Puppy website.

Gordon Setter or Irish Setter - which pet is right for me?

Both Setters are amazing dogs for a highly active family seeking a big dog with a strong, loving personality.

The Gordon Setter is going to thrive most as an active home-focused dog. The breed is great with small kids but to get the most out of a Gordon Setter you'll probably need to be experienced in training strong-willed dogs. The Gordon Setter is definitely not a dog to live alongside small pets.

The Irish Setter is going to lap up as much exercise, attention and play as you can throw at it! This is a mischievous, fun-loving breed who lives for family. However, the Irish Setter's natural ebullience may make it a less than ideal choice for a family with small children.

Good luck in finding the right Setter for you.

Sources

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