

WHICH BREED SHOULD BE TOP DOG IN YOUR HOUSE?

Many behavior and health problems in pets can be prevented by seeking guidance before bringing home a new puppy. By doing your homework prior to introducing a new puppy into your home, you can make a choice that fits the characteristics of the members of your household and will make your new dog experience a happy time for all.

The first decision is whether to choose a purebred or a mixed breed. By selecting a mixed breed from an animal shelter or a humane society, an abandoned animal will find a loving home. Often genetic problems associated with purebreds can be avoided. Also the initial cost to adopt the pet is considerable lower by adopting one. It is helpful to know at least one of the parents so that it is easier to predict the size, health and behavior of the pup.

If a purebred is chosen, it should be a breed that's physical and behavioral characteristics best suit the family. The most consistent factor will be the physical characteristics of the breed. Therefore first select a breed that appeals in physical appearance, including coat type, size and shape. Also consider the activity level and exercise requirements of the breed.

Before the family makes a decision visit dog shows where you will get to see what the adults of each breed look like. Do some reading. There are a variety of books available that can help guide you into finding the perfect match for your family. Visit the AKC or UKC websites. They offer a plethora of information relating to each dog breed. You will understand the physical characteristics, history of the breed, health concerns, behavioral characteristics, and how to select individuals from a breeder, shelter, or litter. Behavioral factors to consider as you try to decide upon a breed of dog include, activity level, exercise requirements and any reported behavior problems of the breed. Also, find out the origin of the breed (for what work was the breed developed) as this will be one of the most strongly inherited traits. Once you have narrowed the selection down to a few breeds, your veterinarian can guide you as to the physical and behavioral problems that you need to be aware of for each breed.

The Top 10 dogs of 2005 registered through the AKC were the 1)Labrador Retriever 2)Golden Retriever 3)Yorkshire Terrier 4)German Shepherd 5)Beagle 6)Dachshund 7)Boxer 8)Poodle 9)Shih Tzu and 10)Miniature Schnauzer. Are these popular choices correct for you? If your family enjoys outdoor activities, especially those associated with the water, and also has a large fenced in back yard, Labrador and Golden Retrievers are an excellent choice. Do you enjoy the comfort of a lapdog who likes to curl up beside you as you read your favorite book but also has an excellent range of bark vocals when someone rings the doorbell? If so, then the little Yorkshire Terrier seems to fit your family's needs. If your family enjoys taking walks in the park and also appreciates a highly intelligent dog who excels at obedience training, German Shepherds would fit your family's lifestyle. How about a rambunctious youthful acting dog who is at their best romping and running circles around your children in your spacious backyard? If this sounds like a sublime scenario, then consider Boxers as your top dog. If elegance and

refinement on four legs sounds like your ideal dog, then the lovely Shih Tzu might be the perfect companion for your residence.

Again, do some research prior to obtaining a dog so that whichever dog gets top billing that dog is a good match for the activity level of your household and becomes a permanent part of your family.