

# How to choose your dog

The American Kennel Club has divided dog breeds into 7 groups, each group being characterized by breeds that manifest similar behavioural traits. For example, some dogs may be athletic while others master different skills. The 7 groups identified by the American Kennel Club are as follows:

- Sporting;
- Working;
- Herding;
- Terrier;
- Non-sporting/Miscellaneous;
- Hound;
- Toy.

In order to guide you in choosing your future dog, let's quickly review the 7 groups and their characteristics.

## Sporting

In general, dogs belonging to this group are **easily distracted**, which could help during play time, but could complicate your life when it comes to training them.

These dogs need to **spend a huge amount of energy**. If this need isn't met, it could lead to behavioural problems such as barking, digging holes, destroying items... The sporting dog is meant to run. If that's not your type of exercise, there are valid alternatives such as throwing a ball or going to the dog park where it can run free and play with other dogs. One can consider using a treadmill, but beware! It must not replace walking your dog, but rather help with the dog-walking intensity. You must be willing to provide your dog with approximately 2 hours of exercise per day.

Setters, Cockers, Retrievers and Spaniels represent this group well.

Please note that **Spaniels and Cockers are highly sensitive** and render them less suitable to live with children, while **less sensitive Retrievers** are an asset in this situation. However, we want to remind you how important it is to teach your child to treat the dog with respect, especially when it is eating or sleeping. Incidents often occur due to a lack of vigilance.

## Working

Dogs of this breed are generally quite **independent** and have a tendency to be dominant. For these reasons, they are not recommended for adoption if one lacks experience with dogs. The owner must absolutely take on the Alpha male role.

Working with positive reinforcement is a must. These dogs are **not very sensitive** making them good companions with young children.

The more common breeds found in this category are quite diverse: Nordic dogs (Siberian Husky, Alaskan Malamute, Samoyeds, etc.), Saint-Bernards, Dobermans, Bull Mastiffs, Rottweilers, Bernese Mountain dogs, Schnauzers, etc.

**Energy expenditure requirements** for these dogs can vary widely. For example, Siberian Huskies need a minimum of two hours of daily exercise and have a high need to run, while Saint-Bernards are innately calm. However, we want to remind you that all dogs, without exception, need a regular dose of **exercise on a daily basis**. An inadequate amount of exercise can lead to behavioural problems, such as barking excessively, destroying property (frequently observed with Huskies), digging holes, etc.

## Herding

Dogs from this group are in general **easily distracted** due to their strong natural instinct to hunt, and are therefore **very sensitive to young children** who run around and to **moving** vehicles and bicycles.

Herding dogs are generally **very attached to their owners** as they were originally bred to work closely with their masters. This trait may sometimes render them **dependent** upon their masters, which may lead to **anxiety separation problems**. It is therefore important for them, from a very young age, to get used to their master's absence.

These dogs are excellent companions for less experienced owners.

As a rule, the breeds that comprise this herding group are all shepherd dogs – obviously, Collies, Border Collies, *Bouvier des Flandres* (also known as Flanders Cattle dogs), German Sheppards, Corgis, etc.

Moreover, the herding dog needs to **spend energy and be mentally stimulated**. Mental stimulation may be satisfied by obedience sessions or such games as object retrieval. If their needs are not met, they may **develop behavioural problems** by digging, barking excessively, destroying objects, running after their tails, etc.

## Terrier

Terriers are intense dogs as they are active and tenacious; they are also very quick. They were chosen to hunt and kill vermin. We do not recommend them for owners who have little knowledge of the canine world, as they could easily become overwhelmed by these strong-headed dogs.

The most common breeds belonging to this group are the Fox Terrier, the Airedale Terrier, the Bull Terrier, the West Highland White Terrier (Westie), the Staffordshire Terrier, the Scottish Terrier, the Jack Russell, etc.

In general, Terriers have a great need to **spend energy and be mentally stimulated**. If these needs are not met, they may show destructive behaviour and a tendency to dig holes, all due to their genetic code.

## Non-sporting / Miscellaneous

The dogs that make up this group may have **needs and display behaviours that vary a lot depending on the breed**, as they represent dogs that cannot be classified in other existing categories. Consequently, some dogs have sporting dog traits (Poodles, Dalmatians, etc.) while others will demonstrate guard dog qualities (Chow-Chow, Lhasa Apso, etc.). The dogs are not meant to work: motivating them for training may therefore pose a challenge. However, this particular aspect may make it easier for novice owners to live with these breeds.

Breeds that are part of this group are Bulldog, Poodle, Chow-Chow, Dalmatian, Shar-pei, Lhasa Apso, etc.

Needs vary according to breed. Consequently, we strongly recommend that you do research on the breed that piques your interest in order to ensure that your lifestyle matches the needs of your future pet.

## Hound

Hounds are essentially hunting dogs. Therefore, these dogs are easily distracted by odors and movement, and they were selected to work independently from their owners, which in turn makes these dogs less attached to them. Also, the pack race instinct is less present in Hounds.

The best representatives of the Hound group are Beagles, Teckels, Greyhounds, Bassets, etc.

When in training, it is important to concentrate on rewards and the dog's motivation. Allowing them to follow scents may be a good reward and has the added bonus of acting as a good mental stimulus, which is greatly beneficial in meeting part of these dogs' needs.

## Toy

Toy dogs are often more easily “manageable” due to their small stature, because a bad behaviour may be less bothersome than if it presents itself in a big dog. And yet, because of this, it is very easy to **establish a bad relationship** with one’s dog, by treating it like a child or a toy. Don’t forget! Even though they may be small, they have the **same sensitivities and instincts** as bigger dogs. One must, therefore, not lose track that one is dealing with an animal, and that dogs must live with boundaries and limits just as they would have to do within a pack.

Most common toy dog types are Chihuahua, Bichon, Toy Poodle, Pugs, Shih Tzu, Pekinese, Pinscher, etc.

Despite their small size, Toys **need exercise** like any other dogs, although in lesser amounts. However, they are more **fragile** and one must always take their stature into consideration, even when it comes to training them.

## Conclusion

Finally, remember that regardless of breed, a dog needs exercise, mental stimulation, discipline and a good rapport with their master. It’s up to you to make your dog your best friend.

For more details about a group or a breed in particular, visit the American Kennel Club’s official Website @ <http://www.akc.org>