

Pets love us just as we are. They don't care about our hair, house, grades, age, weight or shoes. You can read and sing and talk to them about a-n-y-t-h-i-n-g! They are not free from expense and effort, but they'll reward you many times over. From hamsters and horses to birds, fish, kitty cats and more, you'll find need-to-know basics and fun facts every month right here at Pets Rule.

The BIG Dog

By Joanne M. Anderson / jmawriter.com

“No one appreciates the very special genius of your conversation as the dog does.”
~ author Christopher Morley

There's nothing quite like a very large big dog to throw your arms around and share your secrets ~ the good, the bad and the ugly. The dog loves you unconditionally. They are amazingly fun, loving, attractive and loyal, and there are several things to think about before getting a puppy which will gain some 80 or 100 pounds over the first year! Puppies require a lot of work, and there are numerous animal shelters and rescue organizations where you can find an adult dog which needs a home.

The large breeds are 3 of the top 4 most popular dogs in the U.S. for their good looks, trainability and family-friendly personalities:

- ❖ Labrador Retriever
- ❖ German Shepherd
- ❖ Golden Retriever

Each one of these and other sizable dogs take up a lot of room and need wide open spaces for romping and exercise. A long walk on a leash is helpful, but large dogs must be able to run, sniff, stop, go, chase a ball (or a squirrel or cat occasionally) and stretch their legs to stay physically sound and mentally stimulated. Sporting breeds like retrievers, setters and pointers are especially needy of vigorous exercise, as are Dalmatians, vizslas and weimaraners. Huskies, great Pyrenees and mastiffs are among the working dogs, and they love to work.

Gigantic dogs like Great Danes, St. Bernards and Newfoundlands have the shortest life span averaging under 10 years, while the popular retrievers and shepherds can live to 13 or 14. Some dogs drool, others shed big-time and yet others tend to bond with one person, not especially a family.

Many towns and cities have dog parks, which are terrific for doggie outings and lots of running around and usually an equal amount of sniffing and such. All these large dogs are happiest and most well-balanced when they receive plenty of exercise. As long as greyhounds, which off-the-track make marvelous family pets, and Irish setters have the opportunity to run for 20 to 30 minutes once or twice a week, they are calm inside the house. Large dogs are often much easier to train than smaller ones, and they often are

good watch dogs. While they might lick a thief, their big barks often will deter anyone from trying to enter your home or property.

Big dogs are naturally more expensive because they eat more food, and vet bills, toys, boarding and travel all cost more. If they become bored or are left alone frequently, they may chew on anything handy, like the couch, your bedding or favorite shoes. They can be like a bull in a china shop, unaware of their own size, sweeping glass knickknacks, for example, right off the coffee table with their tail or backing into something.

Since the large dogs can have orthopedic issues any time in life, it is advisable to buy from a reputable breeder if you want a specific breed and do not rigorously make them run or take very long hikes until they are older than 18 months. This helps assure good bone and structure development. They will love you back as much or more than you can love them ~ just buy their food in bulk and maybe purchase a snow shovel for a pooper scooper! Bow-wow!