



## American Kennel Club Breed Information

By Brenda F. Barnette, CEO

The American Kennel Club (AKC) classifies dog breeds in seven groups. Some knowledge of these groups may be helpful in determining what breed of dog or what mix of breeds will best fit your lifestyle.

Dogs in the Sporting Group, such as the Irish Water Spaniel, Gordon Setter and Labrador Retriever, are sweet family members. They are known for their hunting instincts in the water and in the forest. Sporting dogs require regular activity. They need daily exercise where they run hard before lying peacefully at your feet while you read the paper. These are the dogs you see racing into the ocean to retrieve sticks thrown by their caregivers while on a daily walk on the beach. They may also be the dogs you see comfortably accompanying joggers. Without good exercise, Sporting dogs can become overweight barkers, diggers and chewers.

The Hound Group is diverse. It includes the Pharaoh Hound, Norwegian Elkhound, Afghan and Beagle. They come from dogs who were used for hunting. Some hunt by following a scent trail, while others are sight hounds who have great stamina and can run down prey. Some hounds make a distinct sound known as baying. Hounds love people, but they will follow their instincts and may be a challenge to keep at home and to train.

Dogs in the Working Group were bred to have jobs. This Group includes the Doberman Pinscher, Newfoundland, Portuguese Water Dog and the Siberian Husky. Some are guards, some pull sleds and others do water rescue. The Working dogs have helped humans through the ages. They are steadfast companions who learn quickly. Their strength may make many of them unsuitable pets for the average family. They must be properly trained. Even gentle giants like Newfoundlands, who are natural and trustworthy nannies for young children, are very large dogs who require grooming and exercise to keep them in good condition.

The Terrier Group has dogs who are feisty and have a lot of energy. This Group includes small dogs like the Cairn or West Highland White Terrier up to the larger Airedale Terrier. Their ancestors hunted and killed vermin. Many Terriers are always ready for an argument that is known as sparring. Terriers typically have little tolerance for other animals, including other dogs. Most have a wiry coat. Terriers make delightful family members, but the human must be ready for the challenge with consistent training techniques and a sense of humor. They are highly intelligent dogs, and you may wonder if it is you training them or they you as Terriers will insist on giving their own twist to following instructions.

The Toy Group's main role is to delight their human families. This Group includes such favorites as the Chihuahua, Pug and Pomeranian. Although small, these dogs are tough. I do not recommend taking them to the dog parks where they will be vulnerable to larger

dogs. Toy dogs make good apartment dogs and great lap warmers. These Toy breeds can be constant companions, and they can even travel on the airlines as carry on luggage that slides under your seat.

The Non-Sporting Group is even more diverse than the Hound Group. The Non-Sporting Group includes the Boston Terrier, Chow, Dalmatian, Poodle and Lahsa Apso. The coat, size and ancestral backgrounds are varied. The breeds who have the short noses, known as brachycephalic breeds, are thought to be less likely to wander off to follow a delightful scent. Some people are entertained by the snoring of these brachycephalic breeds. Short noses can be found in other Groups, too.

The Herding Group shares the ability to move other animals. This Group includes the Australian Shepherd, German Shepherd and Welsh Corgi. The strong instinct to herd is often quite evident as these dogs will herd their owners, especially children. These dogs make excellent companions if they are well trained, but the herding instinct can be very problematic. The image of a Corgi, less than 12 inches tall at the shoulder, driving a herd of cows by leaping and nipping at their heels may be worth considering if you are attracted to Herding dogs. These dogs, like the Working Group, are happiest when they have a job to do.

I have worked and lived with both purebred and mixed breed dogs for over 40 years. I love them all for a variety of reasons. Purebred dogs make lovely family members, though many are performance-driven animals needing jobs to be kept happy and out of trouble. Most mixed breed dogs reflect the characteristics of the different breeds they resemble – perhaps mellower in their behaviors and easier to live with.

Consider your own lifestyle as you search for a new feline or canine family member. After all, you are selecting a friend for life. In the words of Roger Caras, “Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole”.