

Dog

Dogs were the first animals tamed by people. About 10,000 years ago, prehistoric people used dogs as watchdogs. Over time, people trained them to help hunt deer and other wild animals and to herd sheep and cattle.

Today, many people keep dogs as pets. Dogs are loyal and friendly companions. They can also be trained to track criminals, sniff out hidden explosives and drugs, rescue accident victims, and guide blind people. Dogs take part in races, perform in circuses, and sometimes even star in movies and TV shows.

Kinds of dogs

There are many different kinds, or breeds, of dogs. Some of these dogs look like wolves, their relatives from long ago. The German shepherd is a good example. But most dogs look nothing like wolves. Toy dogs, such as the pug or Pekingese, are small dogs. They are raised to be house pets.

The smallest dog is the chihuahua (*chee WAH wah*). Most chihuahuas are about 5 inches (13 centimeters) tall at the shoulder and weigh from 1 to 6 pounds (0.5 to 2.7 kilograms). The tallest dogs are the Irish wolfhound and the Great Dane. Both can be 39 inches (99 centimeters) tall at the shoulder. The St. Bernard, one of the heaviest dogs, weighs up to 200 pounds (90 kilograms).

Purebred and mixed-breed dogs
There are more than 300 kinds of purebred dogs. A purebred dog is a dog whose father and mother belong to the same breed. People who

sell purebred dogs keep records of each dog's pedigree—its parents and grandparents.

Many dogs are not purebred. They are mixed-breed dogs, sometimes called mutts or mongrels. Their parents were dogs of different breeds or of mixed breeds. Mutts come in every size, shape, and color. They are often healthier and stronger than purebred dogs.

How a puppy grows

A female dog may give birth to 1 to 10 puppies at a time. Small dogs usually have fewer puppies at one time. Puppies are blind and helpless at birth. Their eyes open about 10 to 15 days later. They can walk when they are 2 to 3 weeks old. They begin to bark and wag their tails then, too. Puppies feed on only their mother's milk for the first 3 weeks and then begin to eat solid food, too. When they are 6 weeks old, they no longer need their mother's milk. The best time to adopt a puppy is when it is 6 to 8 weeks old.

Keeping a pet dog

A dog needs love and care all its life. A puppy must be trained to be clean and obedient. It learns by being praised for doing the right thing at the right time and in the right place.

A dog enjoys company and loves to play. It needs exercise to stay healthy. In many cities, dogs must be kept on a leash by law. A dog running free may cause a traffic accident, fight other dogs, bite people, or hurt other animals.

Dogs get sick sometimes. A pet dog should be taken to the veterinarian (*veh-t uhr uh NAIR ee uhn*) for checkups. A veterinarian is a doctor that takes care of animals. Dogs need shots to prevent common dog diseases.



Dogs make good friends for people of all ages.



Specially trained dogs do a number of jobs. This dog is using its sharp sense of smell to help a policeman find illegal drugs.



A Shetland sheepdog helps take care of sheep.



The Chesapeake Bay retriever, like other retrievers, is a good swimmer.



Irish wolfhound



Puppies feed on their mother's milk until they are about 6 weeks old. These dogs are Chesapeake Bay retrievers.



A bulldog wags its tail to show it is having fun with its ball. Playing with a ball is good exercise, too.



A grown-up and puppy