

FAQS ABOUT “PIT BULL” DOGS FROM POTENTIAL ADOPTERS & DOG OWNERS

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CAN I ADOPT A PIT BULL IF I HAVE A CAT?

Dogs and cats have individual personalities, so finding the right match for both animals is essential to their future relationship.

Things to ask yourself before searching for your new dog are: Is my cat accustomed to dogs? Does my cat prefer to snuggle up to a dog or prefer to be left alone? Does my cat have a tendency to run away from dogs? The answers to these questions will determine if your cat is comfortable living with a dog and what canine personality would be the best match for them.



If your cat is new to dogs, then it's helpful to find out if the dog you're interested in adding to your family has any experiences with cats.

Regardless of past history, it is essential that you take introductions of cats and dogs slowly and provide proper management. This is just as true for dogs that have previously lived with cats, as it is with dogs that have an unknown history living with cats. For more tips on introducing a cat and dog, please see this article from StubbyDog:

<http://stubbydog.org/2012/01/dog-cat-introductions/>

CAN I ADOPT A PIT BULL IF I HAVE ANOTHER DOG? WHAT ABOUT DOGS THAT ARE THE SAME SEX?

Yes. The key to creating a happy multi-dog household is knowing your dog and finding the right match for them. All dogs are individuals. While some dogs will happily hang out with all dogs, there are a rare few that will not get along with any other dogs. The majority of adult dogs fall some where in between those two extremes. Some



dogs prefer housemates of the opposite gender, while others are comfortable with the same gender. And some dogs like to play with other dogs, but would prefer not to live with them.

With that in mind, it's important to know the dog you currently have and understand what he likes in his friends, before you begin your search.

Before deciding you want a multiple dog home you may want to read *Feeling Out Numbered* by Patricia McConnell. Once you have chosen a dog, be sure to take your time with introductions. Check out this link from Our Pack for some helpful hints:

<http://www.ourpack.org/dogdogintros.html>

CAN I ADOPT A PIT BULL IF I HAVE KIDS?

Yes, kids and dogs are individuals. The best way to create a good match between a dog and your child is to know your children and understand what works best for them. Once you determine your child's needs, you can search for a dog that would be a good match. Interactions between dogs and children should always be supervised, starting at day one.

For more information about choosing the right dog for your family, and creating safe, happy relationships between dogs and children, please see this interview with founder of Family Paws Parent Education Jennifer Dawson Shryock:

<https://animalfarmfoundation.wordpress.com/2013/06/26/kids-dogs-jennifer-shryock/>



CAN I ADOPT A PIT BULL IF I LIVE IN AN APARTMENT?

Yes, if your landlord permits. Visit our Resources for Dog Owners section for tips on renting with your dog.

CAN I ADOPT A PIT BULL IF I'VE NEVER OWNED A DOG BEFORE?

Yes. Everyone was a first time dog owner at some time in their lives! To find the right dog for your family, know what you want in a dog and seek out that personality. Look for a dog that suits your lifestyle as it is now, not as you might wish it to be. For example, if you already enjoy daily vigorous exercise, such as running, then find a dog that will enjoy that lifestyle with you. If you are a couch potato and love to stay home and watch movies, consider adopting a lower key "pit bull" dog.

Be honest about what you like to do, then find the dog that matches your lifestyle.

I'M NOT VERY ATHLETIC. HOW MUCH EXERCISE DOES A PIT BULL NEED?

Every dog will have different exercise needs, so you'll be able to find a dog that fits your

lifestyle. Talk to the people that work with the dogs at your shelter or rescue. Be honest about your lifestyle and let them help you find a "pit bull" dog that has a similar energy level.

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY PIT BULLS UP FOR ADOPTION AT MY LOCAL SHELTER?

Since "pit bull" isn't a breed and because there is no agreed upon definition of what makes a dog a "pit bull", there are many dogs that are labeled pit bull. Shelters are forced to assign a label, but what they choose isn't always accurate. Of course, some shelters do see a larger population of pure bred American Pit Bull

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Terriers and American Staffordshire Terriers. This may be due to many reasons, such as the popularity of those breeds in your community and local breeders. It is most important to know that even though many dogs are assigned the label “pit bull”, it doesn’t mean they are genetically or behaviorally similar or that you can predict a dog’s behavior based on that label. All dogs, no matter what their breed or breed mix, are individuals. Visit our FAQs about Labels for more information.



ARE THE PIT BULLS IN SHELTERS FROM FIGHTING RINGS?

No. Despite the hype, dog fighting is not common. The overwhelming majority of “pit bull” dogs in the shelters were not bred by or abused by the people who fight dogs. They might be there due to overpopulation, owner surrender (because of moving, divorce, financial stress, etc), or other common reasons that all dogs might find themselves in a shelter.

However, dogs that have been rescued from cruelty situations, such as dog fighting, are still individuals and will recover from their past mistreatment in different manners. Being a victim of cruelty will not determine how a dog will act once they are in a home.

Shelters and rescues will have information on dogs rescued from cruelty situations, so their past will not be hidden from adopters. More importantly, the staff and volunteers will be able to share how the dogs are doing now that they are being cared for with compassion.

WILL MY PIT BULL TURN ON ME WHEN HE’S NO LONGER A PUPPY?

No. This is a myth. Dogs, no matter what breed or breed mix, do not suddenly turn. However, puppy behavior does not determine adult behavior. All dogs, regardless of breed or breed mix, mature into adults and with that often come behavior changes – just like with people and other living beings.

As your dog matures, watch for any changes in behavior and address them as they come up. Most behavior issues are fixable or manageable, if addressed in an appropriate manner.

HOW DO I SOCIALIZE MY PIT BULL WITH OTHER DOGS?

“Pit bull” dogs will all have individual personalities and therefore their tolerance for other dogs will differ. If your dog is an adult, it helps to figure out his personal play style – does he like to wrestle or chase? Does he prefer gentle play or is he a rough and tumble guy? Matching dogs with similar play styles will help set up successful, fun friendships. If your dog is not comfortable playing with other dogs or needs more structure, consider socializing him in a more controlled setting, like a training class, a dog walking club, or on parallel leashed dog walks with friends.

If your dog is a puppy, teach him to enjoy dogs of different sizes, shapes and styles. This can often be done through a puppy socialization class. Make sure you do not put your puppy with dogs that are not appropriate.

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DO PIT BULLS NEED TO BE TRAINED USING FORCE?

No dog needs to be trained using force. “Pit bull” dogs, like all other dogs, learn through the consequences of their actions. For example, if I sit, I get a cookie, but if I jump up, then the people go away. Behaviors that are highly reinforced with something the dog loves (like food, toys, or attention from people) are more likely to happen in the future. Behaviors that do not produce those rewards are less likely to happen in the future. You can learn more about positive reinforcement training in our Training section.

Someone told me I need to be more “dominant” with my pit bull, so he knows who the “alpha” is. Is that true? No. What you need to be is consistent with your dog, so that he knows what is expected of him. Ask him to earn things that are important to him by sitting and waiting patiently. Reinforce good behaviors and you will have a well balanced dog.

MY PIT BULL GOT INTO A SCUFFLE WITH ANOTHER DOG. DOES THIS MEAN HE’S NO LONGER SAFE TO LIVE WITH?

Dogs scuffle for many different reasons. A negative interaction with another dog is in no way an accurate or reliable predictor for how dogs will react to people or even to other dogs. It’s important to try to understand what might have caused the altercation. To do this, make a list of what happened before and after the incident. To prevent it from happening again in the future, it’s a good idea to call a trainer or behaviorist to help you sort through this and set your dog up for future success. If the dogs in your home are not getting along, it’s important that they are managed properly (through crates, gates, and other space barriers) and you seek help from a professional trainer or behaviorist.