

Meet the Pug

The Big Little Dog!

Most people are attracted to Pugs because of their small size, sweet nature, curly tail and pushed-in face. Pugs can have appeal for every age, sex and type of human! They are small but sturdy; rough and tumble yet sensitive and sincere. There is nothing a Pug will not try. Their diminutive size is no deterrent if they are approached by an aggressive large dog. Pugs are undaunted in a fight, though it is not typical of them to start a skirmish unless jealousy or food is a major factor. Pugs approach life with an impetuous, whimsical demeanour. This attitude can create both utter delight and hazardous concern for the Pug's caretakers.

Pugs are naturally spoiled little creatures with the highest opinion of themselves! The Pug knows that people were put on earth to cater to his every whim. Pugs have no regard for their human's body except to use it as a bed, source of heat, ladder, back scratcher or means to obtain food. If you are asleep on the couch or in bed, your Pug will think nothing of walking across or standing on your neck and face. Pugs are also docile, quiet and gentle. A Pug will sleep on your infant's blanket with his face nuzzled next to the baby's body. Pugs are equally happy watching the daytime 'soaps' on your lap, or going for a romp in the woods, as long as they are with you. Older Pugs that have slowed down a bit are the best pet for the aged that you could ever find.

The Pug can fill different needs for different people. Regardless of your lifestyle, a Pug will overwhelm you with companionship. This is what they were always intended to do.

Purpose and Origin

The Pug's primary purpose has always been exclusively for the companionship and amusement of their people. Their origin dates hundreds of years before the time of Christ when the very wealthy Chinese bred them for companions and status. An elderly, long-time breeder in England told me a tale many years ago. She said the Pug was so extremely pampered by the ancient Chinese that Pug puppies were often nursed by human wet nurses so the adored Pug bitches would not get out of shape nursing babies. If this is true, it certainly could account for the large majority of our Pug mothers who have less than adequate maternal skills and instincts!

Their lifestyle, since the beginning, tallies a lot of generations of Pugs who have lived to simply endure pampering and adoration! All of this coddling and overindulging have resulted (or perhaps they started out that way) in a breed that enjoys giving pleasure and amusement to their people... as long as they feel they are being treated properly!

The Pug Personality

While no two Pugs are exactly alike, there is definite Pug behaviour that one sees over and over again, generation after generation. Pugs are extremely friendly and uninhibited. It is rare to find a person that a Pug will not climb right up on and lick their face. Pugs are delightful, comical little characters.

They are always coming up with new ways to make you laugh. While this may seem a conscious effort on their part, it comes naturally to them. Pugs make continuous eye contact with their human. They are constantly checking to be sure that they are being watched and completely adored. Pugs are not an aloof breed such as the Pekingese, who may lift their head from the couch to watch you walk past. The Pug will never let you out of sight! If you have a Pug, you will have a constant companion and I do mean constant! If you are washing dishes or standing in one spot for longer than two minutes, the Pug's head will be asleep over your shoe (unless he has figured a way to be in your arms). For some people, this kind of 'togetherness' is a bit intense.

Pugs are Stubborn

Another property of this pampered background results in some not so amiable traits for the ideal house pet. Pugs have a definite stubborn streak! If you are looking for a compliant, always obedient companion, please save yourself and especially your new dog a lot of grief by NOT choosing a Pug. Pugs can quickly acquire exasperating habits to get everything they want, whether it is food, your constant attention or not going out into the snow and wet weather. When training a Pug, you must use positive reinforcement.

Negative training will not produce the desired results. It will only exacerbate the problem.

Pugs are not above using their wiles to get even with you for a perceived injustice that you have done to them.

My first Pug never failed to leave a present on my pillow each and every time I left the house without taking her.

She was perfectly house trained otherwise. Needless to say, she almost always left the house with me.

When old-time Pug owners get together at our national specialty, it is common for us to challenge each other with the worst tale of Pug behaviour. You may wonder why there was ever a second Pug in any household? We have all asked this question at times, but of course, we know the answer. There isn't another breed just like a Pug and when you are hooked on their charm – you are hooked!

Living with Pugs

Pugs are suspended in life at the irresponsible age of a two year old child.

They must be continually and forever watched over and protected. Most of the instincts that other breeds have for safety or survival have long been bred out of the Pug. The average, well-bred, happy Pug is neither destructive nor is he an avid digger or barker. When he does bark, it is with a softer more muffled tone than most dogs display. Pugs are not one of the breeds that require “continual jobs” or they become destructive. Once they are past teething age, they do not have the long ‘needy’ teeth of the terrier. As long as you are with them, their “job” of keeping you company is fulfilled. If you will be gone for long periods of time, that is another matter. Pugs are extremely social and devoted to people. They must be taught from babyhood to spend some ‘quality alone time’. Often another Pug, dog or sometimes a cat, will help fill the hours of human absence. Teenage Pugs, or any Pug that you are unsure of, should be confined during your absence with a favourite chew toy.

Pugs always want to have their own way and they will go to any length to get it. If stifled, it is a good bet that they will get even. To continue to enjoy every aspect of your Pug’s personality, it is imperative that you have a keen and forgiving sense of humour! Your Pug will not thrive, and also will not learn, from being continually crated or disciplined. The obstinate Pug does not do well in a household where all commands must be strictly obeyed to the letter and there are no smiles for the error of Pug ways.

The Pug coat sheds profusely – often the year around. People may fail to realise this before they purchase because many books state otherwise. Because of the excessive hair and dander, Pugs are not a good selection for people with allergies. Pugs need daily care to keep their facial folds clean. On the plus side, the Pug coat is very short and easy to keep clean and free of debris after a walk.

Healthy, well-adjusted Pugs in the best of circumstances are not always sensible and they can display some neurotic or obsessive tendencies occasionally.

For the true Pug lover, this behaviour just adds to the uniqueness and charm of the Pug. The Pug breed is a distinct, wonderful addition to the right home.

Pugs are Not Reliable

You must have a fenced yard that is secure for a small dog, or you must walk your Pug on a leash every time he needs to relieve himself. Accompanying your Pug, off leash, in an open yard, is not acceptable. Pugs have a ‘malady’ that we Pug-folk have coined as “Pug Selective Deafness”. Pugs use this at will in the obedience ring or when they wish to visit a squirrel across a busy street. They don’t hear you trailing behind them shouting their name. If you combine this trait with their stubborn streak, you have a little package that you can never count on. Please save your obedience commands or trust for something that will not devastate your life when it fails. Pugs cannot be reliably boundary trained. Pugs will not come every time you call them. Pugs are not even dependable when you think they are asleep because they have antenna that wakes them if their human tries to sneak away for a minute. The biggest danger in owning a Pug is that they are reliable most of the time and they give you a false sense of security about their behaviour. The Pug hasn’t been born who is always dependable, and I have heard a lifetime of tragic stories. They were not bred originally to be guard dogs or hold trustworthy positions. They were bred to be pampered and watched over and that is what you must do.

Pugs have Their Own Sense of Intelligence

To say that Pugs are not as smart as other breeds is not necessarily true. They may not have the cunning problem-solving abilities or exaggerated intelligence and instincts of some other breeds, but they are plenty smart when it comes to what they think is important in life. Let us just say that Pugs have different priorities!

After decades of observance, I have still not decided if their first passion is their people or food.

Pugs Love Food!!!

You might have guessed by now that if your Pug is normal and happy, you may be forever fighting his weight problem. That is, of course, unless you are trying to put weight on him for a dog show. (That comes under the stubborn streak.) My grandmother once told me that my grandfather would cut off the best part of his meat at dinnertime and sneak it under the table to his dogs.

If you are thinking of getting a Pug for your dear Aunt, who cannot pass by a pleading, imploring, riveting stare without feeding just a tiny morsel, then for the Pug’s sake, please get her a different breed. I have seen young Pugs so obese that they literally cannot walk. To allow a Pug to become overweight will shorten his life and reduce the quality of life. It will break down his joints and reduce his breathing and heart function. If you have a Pug, you must understand that food and love are two different things! Your Pug will insist otherwise every day of his life. You cannot truly love your Pug and allow him to become unhealthy because you have the need to feed titbits.

Pugs are Naïve and Trusting

Pugs have consistent good nature. It is practically unheard of to find a pure-bred Pug from a recognised blood-line that would bite. When a Pug arrives at Pug Rescue with the label of a biter, the first question that comes to mind is whether he is a pure-bred. Pugs adore, even worship their humans (I personally believe it is because their people

feed them). Even if their caretakers abuse and misuse them – they are first and foremost companion animals and often seem delighted to see even the worst owner. It appears as if they can't believe that someone doesn't totally idolise them and they are sure the abuse is a mistake. Pugs will pitifully try different antics to bring about the love they deserve. Because of this personality trait, Pugs are easily kept by "puppy millers" (at least until their whelping and mothering inability's are disclosed) or as kennel dogs. People think that Pugs are happy in a kennel room simply because the Pugs are always so delighted to see them! Often in situations like these, Pugs eventually will develop disorders to call attention to their unhappiness and loneliness. They can become problem barkers, develop a variety of neuroses, or a stubborn case of demodectic mange. If kennelling is a long term way of life, they can become very depressed, lethargic and the lustre seems to leave their very soul.

MY BELIEF IS THAT EVERY PUG ALIVE DESERVES TO BE A HOUSEDOG – A COMPANION LIVING IN A HOME WITH THEIR PEOPLE.

Pugs are Brachycephalic

This basically means that they have a flat face. They have large shallow eye sockets, a large skull and no length of nose to speak of. If you choose a Pug for your family companion, be sure that everyone in your family understands the added risks related to this head type. Your Pug will be much more sensitive to hot and cold temperatures than a normal dog who has a length of nose to warm or cool air before it enters their lungs.

Your Pug will be much more prone to eye injuries and inherited eye problems. More surface of the eyeball is exposed and there is no length of nose to protect the eye from scratches. It is my lifelong opinion, after living with many different breeds, that brachycephalic dogs have impaired depth perception. It is not uncommon for a Pug who is doing 'zooms' through the house to crash into a door jamb while making the turn a bit close. They frequently damage a cornea bumping into a rose bush or other foliage at close range. Most will also jump from any height, some to disaster. Pugs can never be trusted not to jump from car windows, just because they haven't yet! Birthing problems and caesarean sections are common for pregnant Pug mothers because the babies have such large skulls. Pugs do not snore or breathe loudly unless they have an inherited long-soft palate problem. This can be corrected by a simple operation which will make their life much more comfortable and their breathing quiet. Pugs with this problem should never be used for breeding.

Pugs are Eccentric

Quirks are not really breed specific and we all know dogs of other breeds who develop idiosyncrasies. However, Pugs, seem to become, or are born eccentric at a higher rate than any other breed I have been around, Nearly every Pug that I have known in the last 35 years, has had at least one very odd habit, usually more. Two examples would be Wrinkles and Spike.

Wrinkles and her three littermates parted company at 12 weeks of age, but all developed vacuum cleaner fetishes as adults. These Pugs carried it much further than the normal bark and dive at the sweeper. Wrinkles took the strategy of hiding quietly in the closet one day during carpet sweeping. She remained there as her owner put the sweeper in the closet, shut the door and went to another part of the house. Sometime later, while walking near the closet, the owner heard a commotion of loud bangs and growls. When she opened the door she found sweeper and Pug in a frenzied battle to the death with the Pug winning. The bumper of tough rubber was completely destroyed and in shredded pieces. The bag, where Wrinkles had turned her attention after feeling satisfied that the bumper could do no more harm, was beginning to show real damage.

The black Pug, Spike, was the most spiteful, jealous, self-important Pug that I have ever had, but similar behaviour is still popping up four generations down from him. Spike would lay on a footstool just out of reach during 'toddler house-time'. He would glare at the roly-poly Pug puppies scurrying around the room. He knew that he was not allowed to be mean to them so he would wait for the perfect moment to 'sort of fall on them'. His timing was flawless! As a puppy would near his stool, he would slide off backwards over the edge and land on the puppy, who would squeal. Spike, whose feet were up in the air, would feign a look of surprise. The first time, it was hard to believe that this very agile, sure-footed fellow actually fell by mistake, but I gave him the benefit of the doubt. After about the third accurate drop, he was shut in the kitchen during toddler-time. He would then wet on a chair leg, just to have the last word!

Pugs and Children

All Pugs that are well-bred are good with children but not all children are good with Pugs. I have raised two children and three grandchildren with dogs, in basically the same environment. Some children, though they think that they like animals and wish to have one, do not know how to touch or play with them and have difficulty learning. Other children have a natural feeling that is not learned but instinctive. These children seem to enjoy a mutual draw between the animal and themselves. Regardless of the situation with your child, please be sure you are getting a Pug for the right reasons. Do not get a Pug for your child. Children are not little adults and the Pug will have very real needs and demands. The Pug should be a joint effort for the whole family to enjoy and be responsible for. You may wish to give your child the responsibility, for instance, of the water bowl. If that task is not met, your Pug will be

thirsty and your child resentful. It is better to nurture and enjoy the relationship between your child and the Pug. When the Pug is thirsty you can enlist the child's help to keep his furry buddy happy and satisfied. The age of the Pug you purchase should be relative to the age of your children. If you have very young children, you should acquire an adult Pug. Unlike many breeds, Pugs are remarkably resilient and agreeable to new situations. They will work into a new home at any age as long as there is inexhaustible love and attention. In a month or so, no one would ever guess that the Pug had lived elsewhere. If your children are active 5 to 9 years old, a teenage (6 months to 1½ years) Pug is the youngest that you should be considering.

Teenage Pugs are very puppyish and playful. They are often still teething, so they can steal and chew children's toys. They are rambunctious and will jump on your child. A five-year old can usually hold his own with a teen Pug puppy and will enjoy the boundless energy and games. The teen puppy is usually large enough to discourage the child from picking him up to carry him when your back is turned. Children at age 10 are usually mature enough to be trustworthy in the aid and protection of a 12 week to 6-month Pug baby. They can understand the need for 'quiet time' and are able to instruct their friends in proper 'puppy etiquette.'

Do Sex and Colour make a Difference?

Other than the fact that the black Pugs shed their hair a little less than the fawn Pugs, there is little difference in the behaviour between the colours.

It has long been believed by many Pug breeders that the blacks have all the properties of the fawn personality, except that blacks will carry the traits to the extreme. Having bred both colours, I concur with this theory, but it is not always consistent. Both male and female Pugs make marvellous pets!

Sometimes, at maturity, the males are a bit more cuddly and the girls have more on their dance cards, but I've seen it work the other way also. Regardless of your choice in these areas, every pet should be spayed and neutered before reaching puberty. This can alleviate many bad habits and conditions that natural sex hormones can cause.

Pugs Demand Attention

Are YOU ready for a Pug? Are you settled in your life to the point that you spend most of your evenings at home, or go places where your Pug will also be safe and welcome? When you are out of the house, are your children (or anyone living with you) willing and responsible to likewise watch the doors, gates and consider your Pug's safety above everything else? Are your children too small or un-trainable? Will they insist on carrying a Pug puppy around, or squeezing him too tightly? Can you willingly spend the time for daily grooming and consistent training, along with quality time to provide the love, companionship and exercise that your Pug will need? Are you ready for the expense and time it will take to provide proper health and dental care? Will an emergency, such as an eye injury, cause too great of a squeeze in the family budget? Are you able to care for your Pug, or hire someone, if he should get sick?

Is giving your Pug the attention he needs going to cause jealousy problems for your "significant other"? If every member of the family is not welcoming and enthusiastic about having a Pug join the family; Please do not get one! The very worst thing that you could do to a Pug would be to bring one into your family, decide that he is too much for you to deal with most of the time, and relegate him to the laundry room, basement, garage, or shut him away in a crate. Remember, the only purpose of the Pug is companionship. If they are not doing what they were bred to do, they are unhappy. Unhappy dogs often become ill, either emotionally or physically. Every reputable breeder will gladly take their dog back if there is a problem, but it is unfair both to the dog and to the breeder to begin this venture with the probability that it is temporary.

If you have given serious consideration to the above questions and you are anxious to incorporate a Pug into your family's life, you will probably always have at least one. There is nothing quite like a Pug!

Lorene Vickers-Smith 1999

Lorene has been "in dogs" all her life. Her parents and paternal grandparents raised and dabbled in showing Boston Terriers. Lorene established the Wisselwood line of Pugs in 1964 and added Brussels Griffons about 20 years ago. She has been dedicated to establishing and improving the black colour in both breeds.

Lorene became an AKC judge in 1980. She currently is licensed to judge the Toy Group, BIS, and part of Non Sporting. She is Judges' Education Co-ordinator for the American Brussels Griffon Assoc., and she serves on that committee for the Pug Dog Club of America. She Chairs the Illustrated Standard Committee for both parent clubs. She is a past and current director of the Pug Dog Club of America and also serves on their Ethics Committee. She is President of the National Brussels Griffon Club. She founded the Mid Michigan Pug Club in 1979. She has judged Brussels Griffon and Pug Specialties in this country, Australia and France. She was elected to judge the Pug Dog Club of America National Specialty in 1988 and again in 1997. She has also twice been elected to judge the American Brussels Griffon Associations National Specialty. Lorene is past President of Ingham County K.C. and is a member of both her breed clubs in England.

When Lorene is not doing judges education, her time is divided between public education and breed rescue.