

Evolution of the dogs (teacher notes)

Ever wonder how your dog evolved? There are more than 350 different breeds of dog, each one--from the Chihuahua to the Great Dane--descended from the grey wolf.

The domestication of dogs by man dates back at least twelve thousand years. Domestication of the wolf may have begun with orphaned wolf cubs brought into villages and raised by children. Ancient man may have also started the domestication process by befriending wolves which helped them hunt and drive herds.

There were advantages at that time to having semi-tame wolves. The acute hearing of the wolf would alarm humans of imminent danger at night, for example. However, as civilization evolved, the jobs of dogs became more varied and specific; as a result, different breeds were created to handle different jobs. Selective breeding has allowed human manipulation to create the traits that you see in dogs today, such as the pushed-in face of the pug, or the speed of the greyhound to catch its prey.

Regardless of how far your dog has evolved from its ancestor, there is still a great deal of wolf present in the domestic dog. Dogs are still genetically wolves, and they share seventy-eight chromosomes. The two species are still able to cross-breed, creating the wolf hybrid, which (unlike the mate of a horse and donkey, a mule) is not sterile.

Besides the physical similarities, there are many behaviour similarities between the wolf and the dog. Wolves and dogs live in pack societies. They have group rituals such as greetings, feeding, playing, mating, and hunting. Both communicate with other pack members through facial expressions and body movements; vocalizations such as growls, howls, and whines are used. Leading each pack is a dominant male or female. This dog or wolf is known as the alpha. The alpha leads by example, and other pack members show their respect by submission. You may have witnessed this in your own house if you have more than one dog. A dog may cower when faced with another dog, or its hair may stand up (the technical term for this phenomenon: piloerection).

In creating the domestic dog, humans have retained some wolf characteristics. Dogs retain much of the territorialism of wolves and the suspicion of strangers, making dogs effective guardians of our selves and property. The dog has also retained the ability to follow a creature's scent through the forest, and breeding has in some cases actually improved that--the bloodhound, for example. Most dogs are also excellent hunters, which may be a characteristic of the wolf that has stayed genetically stable in the dog.

In contrast, a wolf is unlikely to accept new pack members as well as a dog will accept them. Wolves also will generally act shyly around humans. A wolf never bonds to humans very well, even when raised by people from birth, and is not as trainable. It is true that wolves or wolf hybrids may form emotional bonds with their human companions, but they will also maintain their own autonomy and may never heed a single command given by the human owner. This is why most knowledgeable authorities recommend not buying a wolf or wolf hybrid pup.

Over the thousands of years, we have shaped dogs through breeding into dogs with floppy ears, sleek coats, and short noses--exactly the opposite of their distant ancestor. We have created dogs to suit our needs. However, if you look closely into your dog's eyes, you may realize you are looking into the eyes of a wolf.

Dog cards – print out and laminate



Greyhound

Height: 71-76 cm

Working Greyhounds have strength, endurance and great speed. As pets they are affectionate, gentle and docile. They are happiest when they live in a home that can provide plenty of love and companionship. In Great Britain the Greyhound has been associated with the English monarchy since Anglo-Saxon times. The royal forests, which were vast and well stocked, were the hunting grounds for these hounds and their royal masters.



Afghan Hound

Height: 68-73 cm

For centuries a hunting breed, the Afghan of today is seen as an aristocrat portraying dignity and independence.

It is loyal and affectionate to its family but with strangers it is discriminating. In spite of its strong personality, it is not a fighter and usually gets on well with other dogs. Regular and thorough grooming is essential - at least three times a week for all its adult life. Vigorous daily exercise is also a must. Afghans are strong willed and independent minded, and training them requires determination and perseverance.



Parson Jack Russell Terrier

Height: 28-38 cm

The Jack Russell is a tough little dog, that is full of character, loyal and affectionate with its family but not always friendly towards strangers. They are excellent guard dogs. The Jack Russell is a hardy dog that was bred to work the fox. They have excellent noses which make them ideal hunters of all types of vermin.



Pekingese

Height: 20-28 cm

The Pekingese is an independent breed which displays loyalty, dignity and self confidence at all times. Not usually aggressive or disobedient, although it will obey orders in its own time.

They are adaptable, not minding whether they live in the town or the country.



Pug

Height: 20-25 cm

A robust breed that is full of character. Adaptable and intelligent, they are friends for both old and young alike as they are tolerant and good tempered. The Pug is kind, gentle and trustworthy especially with children. Because of this, the Dutch called them "nursery dogs" and would leave them in the nursery to watch over the children.



Mastiff

Height: 76 cm

Large, powerful dogs which possess the qualities of courage and grandeur. An excellent guard dog, yet gentle and affectionate to its family. Mastiffs require exercise and space in order to keep them physically and mentally happy.



Eskimo Dog

Height: 58-68 cm

The Eskimo Dog is intelligent, independent and extremely tough. Generally good natured and friendly, nevertheless, it is a breed which should only be owned by experienced dog handlers. The breed's feeding habits are different from most other breeds. When on the trail if food is available they are fed every day, while at the home they are probably only fed once or twice a week.



Portuguese Water Dog

Height: 50-57 cm

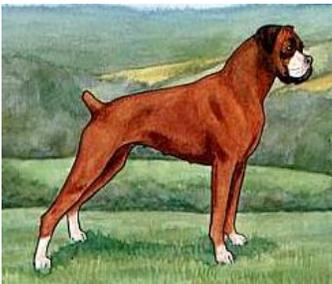
A breed with character and substance. Intelligent, energetic, robust and self-willed. Nevertheless, it has a pleasing disposition and is obedient to its owner. Its long association with water means the dogs of today still display the natural swimming abilities of their ancestors.. The Portuguese Water Dog is principally a sporting breed. It is robust and is endowed with amazing stamina.



Maltese

Height: no more than 25 cm

A sweet tempered and intelligent breed which is usually good with children and make excellent family pets. The breed although diminutive, is robust and energetic and not averse to hunting.



Boxer

Height: 56-63 cm

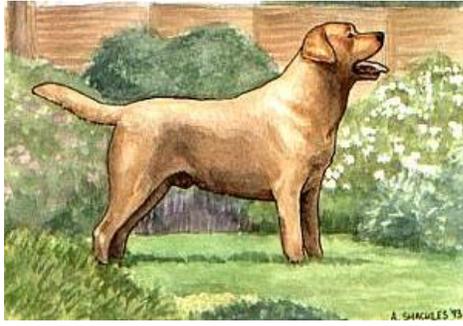
A popular breed which is strong and has plenty of stamina. It enjoys human company and is especially good with children. A non-aggressive and reliable guard dog. An energetic breed, they tend to retain their youth and thoroughly enjoy an active life for a lot longer than some breeds. Boxers are susceptible to a number of ailments, particularly skin cancers and rheumatism. They also slobber a lot. These dogs were all-rounders. With fine muscular physiques and strong broad jaws, they were originally used for bear and bull-baiting. They were courageous hunting dogs that were capable of dealing with big game such as wild ox and wild boar. Also they were used on the farms as cattle dogs.



Rough Collie

Height: 56-61 cm

The Collie is a one man family dog and will show great affection and loyalty to all members of its family. It is intelligent and often appears to have a sixth sense. A good guard dog that is wary of strangers until excepted by its master. The rough collie is a sheepdogs which has been used to herd, drive and gather in the flocks for centuries. They often worked in very difficult conditions especially in the mountainous regions in the far north of the British Isles.



Labrador Retriever

Height: 56 - 57 cm

As companions Labradors are kindly, patient, intelligent and always keen to please. They make perfect family dogs being especially good with children. They are not a town dog; long country walks keep them mentally and physically fit.

Soft mouths and a natural ability in water and in wooded and open country have made them a gamekeeper's favourite. They are very successful at trailing and retrieving wounded game.



Bloodhound

Height: 63-69 cm

An affectionate, dignified and noble breed. It is neither quarrelsome with human companions nor with other dogs. It is usually dependable and gentle with children. Individuals live to between 10 and 12 years on average. These hounds follow and find their prey by tracking and not by using their sight.



Samoyed

Height: 51-56 cm

The samoyed is a strong, active and graceful dog which is capable of great endurance. These dogs were originally used as reindeer herders, guards, and pets, and occasionally as sled dogs. Today they are most often found as companions and occasionally as a sled dog.

They are also intelligent, alert and full of action.

Very friendly - displays affection to all mankind and as a result does not make a good guard-dog.



Pharaoh Hound

Height: 50-56 cm

The Pharaoh Hound's short, glossy coat makes it a joy in the home. They have no doggy odour, even when wet. He's intelligent, friendly, affectionate and playful, alert and active. This is a very fast and agile dog with a marked keenness for hunting both by scent and sight.

The Pharaoh Hound is particularly fond of children and never loses his joy in romping and playing. He particularly craves human attention. Their willingness to please allows them to be easily trained. He is an excellent family pet and companion. This dog was selectively bred to hunt rabbit.

Dog Breeding

Ever wonder how your dog evolved? There are more than 350 different breeds of dog, each one--from the Chihuahua to the Great Dane--descended from the grey wolf.

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A - Choose at least 2 of the dogs from the above list (pick contrasting ones) and answer these questions about the dogs:

1. What useful characteristics does the dog have?
2. Write down the reasons why the dog was bred in the past e.g. hunting, companionship?
3. Give some reasons why the breed is still popular today.

B- Now you will do some selective breeding. Look back at the breeds of dog and decide what two dogs you will breed to create a new breed of dog that will suit these jobs:

1. Dog needed for racing. Must be very fast but medium sized (50cm tall). An enthusiastic worker and also a good hunter.
2. Very intelligent dog that has an excellent sense of smell needed. Must be a large dog (65cm tall) and live a long life (more than 12 years).
3. Large (60cm tall), strong, muscular dog wanted for large game hunting. Must be able to work in a team and be away from home for long periods of time.
4. Kind, patient, good-looking, long-haired dog wanted. Preferably light coloured fur and large (65-70cm tall). Must be easy to train, obedient and able to get on with other people including children and strangers.
5. Large dog (65-70cm tall), must like water and be a good swimmer and hunter. Must have good stamina and be an excellent guard-dog.
6. Small (35-40cm tall) very friendly dog required as a companion to children. Long white hair preferable. Needs to be welcoming to strangers and able to live outside.
7. Dog required that must be an excellent hunter (very fast) and retriever of game. Must be medium sized (around 55cm tall) with a short haired coat and definitely not slobber or smell.