

Characteristics of the Labrador Retriever

Friendly, even temperament, outgoing nature, trainability, versatility, loyalty, affection...and the list goes on!

by Margaret A. Gilbert

Are You a Labrador Person?

If you have breezed through the first part of this chapter, thinking you are a good candidate for a Labrador, then let's explore the breed character further to better understand what kind of a dog the Labrador Retriever really is.

For all the talents of Labrador Retrievers, always top competitors in the nation's field trials and obedience trials, the breed is still only "canine." That is to say, the Labrador is not a "superdog." Mary Feazell, a Labrador fancier and trainer, contends that the 95 percent of what a Labrador can grow up to be depends upon the owner; only 5 percent depends on the dog itself. Such a huge responsibility for the owner of this fabulously talented dog! There is little that a Labrador cannot learn. Some Labradors recognize hundreds of words and can execute dozens of commands. Feazell says, "Being realistic, Labs swim well, but they can't walk on water."

A Labrador Retriever requires a dedicated owner, whether the pursuit is basic obedience (such as sit, stay, come, etc., the commands necessary for a well-trained home companion) or more lofty pursuits like obedience trials, field trials, agility trials, working trials, etc. Many Labrador Retrievers are so intelligent and have such a strong desire to please that they become "self-trained." Labradors are excellent problem-solvers and quickly decide what pleases their masters and what does not! Such self-learned abilities include coming when called, staying where he's put, not bolting through the front door every time it is opened, not jumping up on visitors, permitting people to pet and touch him, not messing in the house, etc. Do not misunderstand. Labradors are smart, but you must be there to show the dog right from wrong. This is no different from instructing a child. Parents must be present for their children if they are to mature properly. Absent parents do not discipline, teach or help their children. Likewise, Labradors must receive enough training to make them capable of self-control and amenable to obeying commands, and minding their owners' wishes.

LOVE OF WATER

A dog with webbed feet must love to swim! Prized for their water retrieving abilities, Labradors naturally take to water and there's not many a Lab who will turn down the opportunity to get his paws wet. Pet Lab owners often enjoy runs and games of fetch on the beach with their dogs. The owner controls what kind of dog his Labrador becomes. The owner provides the dog with training, guidance, encouragement and outlets for his energy and industry. The Labrador who doesn't have proper "parental guidance" can develop behavioral problems, including destructive habits, aggression and fearbiting, to name a few. The owner molds his Labrador into the dog with whom he wants to live. Investing time, money and love into a dog can pay off a thousandfold; skimping on the time and education that a dog as active and bright as a Labrador requires can be an owner's worst mistake. Do not rush into the ownership of a Labrador. This is a breed that deserves a top-quality owner, and if you're not sure about the acquisition, delay your decision. Read more about the breed, talk to breeders, owners and trainers, attend a dog show and meet people who commit their lives to their dogs, and then you'll be better prepared to take the dive into dog ownership.

For those of you who are certain that a Labrador Retriever is the dog with whom you want to share your life, this wonderful dog can become your world. Whether it's a pet companion dog, show dog or field and working dog you require, the Labrador Retriever can become all you want in a faithful canine friend.

Characteristics of a Labrador Retriever Excerpts from Comprehensive Owners Guide: Labrador Retriever