

Characteristics of the Labrador Retriever

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

by Margaret A. Gilbert

The answer to the question "Why the Labrador Retriever?" too often seems to be "Why not!" Since there are literally millions of happy Labrador lovers around the world, why shouldn't everyone love a Lab? Given the breed's good looks, trainability, loyalty, intelligence, etc., why isn't this the dog for everyone on the planet who loves dogs?! Let's begin by listing the kinds of people who should not consider the ubiquitous Labrador for their lives. Then we will examine the Labrador Retriever's character and the kinds of people who are ideal owners for this talented fellow.

SERVICE DOGS

The Labrador Retriever has been used in more areas of service to humankind than any other breed. Here are ten important areas that the breed has served:

1. Companions for all.
2. Hunting and retrieving for sportsmen.
3. Guides for the blind.
4. Hearing dogs for the deaf.
5. Arson and bomb detection.
6. Drug and substance detection.
7. Watch dogs for businesses and residences.
8. Search and rescue/avalanche and earthquake work.
9. Therapy dogs for hospitals.
10. Cancer detection.

OWNERS BEWARE!

Potential Owners Who Are Looking for a Lap Dog

The Lab is no lap dog. Sure he'll want to "lap" and kiss you constantly, but he's too big to sit on your lap while you're reading or spending time in front of the television. Labradors like to be close to you, that's for sure, but 60 pounds (or more) of true love is too much for anyone's lap!

Potential Owners Who Do Not Like Exercise

Labradors love to romp and play, preferably with their trusted owners close by. Since the breed is designed for chasing birds in the swamp or swimming toward fallen ducks, Labs most definitely have "energy to spare." Since most pet Labrador owners do not have the time or inclination to take their dogs out on weekend duck hunts, Labradors will need other outlets for their abundant energy.

Potential Owners Who Do Not Have a Fenced Yard

The Labrador needs a sizeable piece of property on which to exercise, and a fence is imperative. As a gundog, the Labrador does not have a strong sense of territory, and he will not guard his property the way a Rottweiler or Doberman Pinscher will. This is not to say that he is not protective—he is most protective of his family and home. However, if not fenced in he will more likely tear off in pursuit of a flapping pigeon than stay close by and stand watch.

Potential Owners Who Are Seeking an "Ornamental" or Outdoor-Only Dog

The Labrador Retriever, for all his natural good looks and charm, does not fancy an owner that doesn't want to get up close to him and spend time with him indoors and out. Like most of the sporting breeds, the Labrador likes to be near his family inside the home. While it is true that the Labrador's ancestors were "kennel dogs," today's Labrador is strongly inclined to be indoors with his master and loved ones. To keep a Labrador outdoors exclusively will be torture to the poor dog, and such owners should consider a different breed or no dog at all. While the breed is renowned for its adaptability with any lifestyle, the breed is best when kept indoors and given time to spend outdoors. A happy Labrador is the true Labrador, and close to you is where your Labrador will want to be.

Potential Owners Who Are Fussy About Their Home

The Labrador sheds. Even though the breed has a short, dense coat, he does not cast coat any less than any other dog. Furthermore, the Labrador is not, as a rule, a genteel or docile animal—he's a "doggy" dog, and he likes to play inside and out. Owners will have to enforce the house rules immediately with the puppy, or else he may think he can roughhouse

inside the house and out. Labradors can be raucous, rambunctious and rowdy—that's three "R's" potential owners may have to live with.

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Excerpts from Comprehensive Owners Guide: Labrador Retriever