

## Considering a Jack Russell Terrier

**A prospective JRT owner wonders about the breed's child- and apartment-friendly qualities.**

*By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG*

**Q.** I am interested in getting a Jack Russell Terrier, but I would like to know a few things about them. Are they good with younger kids and about what weight will they grow to? I live in an apartment building that will only let me have an animal that is up to 30 pounds. My parents have two Rat Terriers who do well with my son, and I have always liked the Jack Russells, so if you have any information on them, could you send it my way?

**A.** At one time, all these tough little hunting terriers from England were called Jack Russell Terriers but since 2003, the AKC has recognized only the longer-legged variety and renamed them the Parson Russell Terrier, now considered a separate breed. The smaller Jacks are still recognized by every other major purebred registry worldwide and there is a very active Jack Russell Terrier Club of America (JRTCA) where you can also research this lively little dog. Whatever you call them, they originated with the Reverend John Russell in the south of England in the 1800s, bred specifically to hunt foxes. They are active and energetic dogs, requiring plenty of exercise to keep them out of trouble because they were bred to hunt, not sit around and be admired like lap dogs.

They come in three coat types: smooth, broken (intermediate), and rough (longer and harsher). As far as grooming goes, the smooth-coated variety is the easiest, but all three types shed. The broken and harsh-coated types do well with hand-stripping a couple of times a year. Some owners opt to have them clipped down but this softens their trademark tough coat over time.

Size-wise, they would fit your landlord's requirements. Under 15 inches in height and weighing 13 to 17 pounds, the males are slightly larger than the females. However, they need plenty of room to run and play so a yard with a fence high enough so they can't climb it is preferable to a stroll in the park on a leash. They also love to dig. They are small dogs with big attitudes, often ready to scrap with any other dogs they encounter, regardless of their size.

Whether or not they are good with children depends upon how both the dog and your offspring are trained. I would not recommend them around infants or toddlers but they can be great playmates for school-age kids. These feisty fellows are not for everyone, being wily, strong-willed, and so athletic they can climb like cats. They are usually predatory towards house cats and other small creatures. They require an owner as smart as they are.

Jack Russells grew in popularity when they started showing up on TV and in the movies. Eddie on the show Frasier was a rough-coated Jack while the RCA icon Nipper was a smooth variety. Since they are quite similar to the Rat Terriers owned by your parents, if you want to continue a family tradition, I would consider one of those as well.