

A Kid-Friendly, Clean Dog

Some dog breeds are great with kids and shed less than others.

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

Q. We are looking to get our three boys a dog. We'd want a clean dog who does not shed and is great with kids. Can you recommend a few dog breeds that would be good for us?

A. There are many breeds that would fit your requirements so your choice will boil down to which one captures your hearts. Your criteria specify that the dog should be good-natured, patient with kids and not re-carpet your home with shed hair.

While not all terrier breeds are terribly tolerant of children, several are happy, energetic and offer minimal shedding, although professional grooming would be required. Best bets in this category would be the West Highland White, Cairn, Soft-Coated Wheaten, and Kerry Blue. Although they are high-maintenance in terms of grooming needs, the Old English Sheepdog, Bearded Collie and Tibetan Terrier make awesome family dogs.

If really large breeds tickle your fancy, research the Irish Wolfhound, Scottish Deerhound and English Mastiff, whose minimal shedding can be easily controlled with a rubber curry brush. The Curly-Coated Retriever and Portuguese Water Dog are fun-filled companions who love to swim. Despite its small size, the Havanese is a hardy little character who is good with children. Bulldogs and Boston Terriers are lovable pals for kids but must not be over-exerted in warm weather. The trendy Labrador Retriever-Poodle mix (Labradoodle) and Golden Retriever-Poodle mix (Goldendoodle) are fast becoming family favorites as well.

Having a dog can enrich a child's life immeasurably and teach valuable lessons in responsibility, but youngsters need to be trained to handle a dog safely, and never to tease, hit, or bother this new family member when he's eating or tired. Your dog's crate should be his own private sanctuary when he needs a rest. And while children should be encouraged to help out in every area of pet care, of course the ultimate responsibility for a dog's health, upkeep, and training will still rest with you.