

## Popular Dogs: Boxers

**The people-oriented Boxer possesses a delightful but challenging overabundance of personality that demands management.**

*Eve Adamson*

### 3. Busy Bodies

Boxers are athletic, high-energy dogs with lots of muscle to maintain. They are also intelligent, and if you don't keep those brains busy, you'll have a bored buddy. In fact, mental stimulation may be even more important for Boxers than hours of physical exercise. "Mine are perfectly content to lie around the house. It's simply a matter of devoting enough time, attention and training to them," says Zurflieh.

Satisfy your brainy and brawny Boxer by getting involved in organized activities, such as agility and competitive obedience, or more casual pursuits, such as hiking, walking and mastering tricks. Agility, in particular, is a Boxer favorite. Confident enough not to fear the equipment, this breed also has the strength and flexibility to fly through an agility course with speed and style. "Boxers love agility, and they do agility much better than obedience because it's freer and it's fun. It appeals to the fun side of them," says Dr. Wallner.

Boxers' high energy and intelligence mean you must also be ready to stay one step ahead of them, during activities and at home. "Boxers are notorious for foiling your efforts to keep them under control. I've had [Boxers] that could figure out any kind of latch for any crate or pen in no time. Sometimes they have the door open before you can turn around and walk away," says Dr. Wallner. Boxers are good jumpers and may also escape from fenced yards if they are bored and see something fun to chase on the other side of the fence.

### 4. Stimulation Required

Because Boxers are strong and curious and need lots of stimulation, a bored Boxer can easily become a destructive Boxer -- especially in puppyhood. Roy, one of Zurflieh's Boxers, shredded the door to the laundry room by peeling off the veneer, strip by strip, down to the plywood underneath. "Then he did it to my kitchen cabinets, but when I placed him in a home where he was the only dog and was doted on all the time, he became the most perfectly behaved dog with the most wonderful temperament," says Zurflieh.

Boxers must have plenty of chew toys and lots of mental challenges, and they must be trained starting in puppyhood to know what is and isn't allowed. "My advice is to take your Boxer to obedience class, and don't think one class is going to be the end of the training," says Dr. Wallner. "Training is ongoing. You can't get a dog and never do anything with it and expect it to be perfect, to not chew things, to not misbehave, to not be destructive. You have to show it how to be a good dog," she says.

### 5. Independent Companion

Some dogs are clingy and needy. Not Boxers. They don't crave constant attention; they just want to know where you are. "Boxers are independent and can amuse themselves with a toy for hours," says Dr. Wallner. "They may follow you around, but they don't have to be touching you all the time like some breeds," she says.

Their independence is due in part to their heritage as working guard dogs, responsible for alerting their owners to the presence of intruders. That same independence means Boxers can be a challenge to train. "They are way too independent to fall all over themselves doing what you want. But, if you make it fun for them, they learn so fast, it's almost scary," says Dr. Wallner.

Within 24 hours of bringing Sable home, LaGasse taught her to ring a bell to go outside. "Every time I took her out, I would ring the bell, take her out, then give her a treat. She figured out how to do it on her own in 24 hours. I think that's pretty impressive," says LaGasse.