

Popular Dogs: Boxers

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The people-oriented Boxer possesses a delightful but challenging overabundance of personality that demands management. Exuberant, enthusiastic, active, independent, and with a love for clowning, well-bred Boxers have temperaments best suited for interactive pet owners with high-energy lives.

Knowing the temperament traits of a Boxer and what they will mean to you as a potential Boxer companion are essential before bringing home that jowly mug on four (powerful) legs. To make it easy, we've listed the top 10 temperament traits of Boxers to help you determine if you really are ready to co-habitate with that much personality!

1. Exuberance Unleashed

Ask any Boxer owner what Boxers are like, and chances are you'll hear the word "exuberant" mentioned at least once. They can get pretty boisterous, and that gets on some people's nerves. "They aren't hyper, but they are certainly enthusiastic," says Virginia Zurflieh, a Boxer breeder in Tampa, Florida.

That natural enthusiasm can be a plus in the show ring, where animation makes the Boxer stand out, but it can be a liability in such activities as competitive obedience. "They really are free spirits," says Wendy Wallner, D.V.M., a Boxer breeder with a mobile veterinary practice in Loganville, Georgia. Obedience competition can turn into a comedy act when a Boxer decides to take a break right in the middle of a recall [an obedience exercise in which you call the dog to you] to roll in something that smells good in the middle of the ring, or take a detour to go visit interesting people in the crowd. "Then it comes back, does what you said, and acts like it was all part of the routine," says Dr. Wallner.

This is no mellow couch potato dog. Although Boxers are less active than some dogs, they do best with owners who appreciate and can accommodate their natural exuberance and zest for life. "Even though we spent a lot of time researching different breeds, we were not prepared for the exuberance of a Boxer. It has been an adjustment, but we love Sable dearly, and she really is such a good dog," says Boxer owner Janice LaGasse of Nashville, Tenn. "But sometimes we think we should have named 'Sable Rambunctious' instead. Of course, she's just so cute that she gets away with things," LaGasse admits.

2. Forever Young

Boxers calm down once they reach adulthood (at around 3 years of age), but they never lose that playful puppy spirit. "I have a 10-year-old Boxer that still acts like a puppy. Even in their old age, they are pretty active and stay a lot like puppies right to the end," says Dr. Wallner. Boxer owners often laugh about what Dr. Wallner calls the "running fit." "Louise gets so excited, she starts running amok, especially on the agility course, dashing through the tunnel a few extra times even though she hasn't been asked and racing in big circles. I can't help laughing at her," says Dr. Wallner. "All I have to do is make a funny sound, and they all start running as fast as they can in big circles," says Dr. Wallner of her 10 Boxers.

Sure, Boxers can be very well behaved and in perfect control, but watch out for that twinkle in their eyes because if anyone proposes a game, a Boxer of any age will be more than ready to play hard.