

Popular Dogs: Miniature Pinschers

Find out how this little dog's big attitude can shake up daily life.

By Faith K. Gordon

The Min Pin is a confident little dog that marches to its own drummer. There is a reason Miniature Pinschers are called the King of Toys—this is not a beginner's breed unless you are prepared to have an infinite amount of patience during the first year. Because of its high energy level and curious nature, nothing escapes the Min Pin and it tends to get into mischief on a pretty regular basis. Min Pins do this by conning you and lulling you into a false sense of security, then entertaining you to the point where watching television is pointless. You can either get with the program early on regarding the dog's personality and live in harmony, or forever be out of tune. This dog is dynamite in a small package.

Life is Like a Box of Chocolates

Life with a Miniature Pinscher is like having a dog that is a puppy for its entire life, or a similar comparison would be a human child staying 2 years old—forever. “Be prepared for active, toddler-like behavior for life, above-normal amounts of barking, challenging housebreaking, but also lots of loving and fun,” says Armando Angelbello of Davie, Florida, who has been breeding and showing Min Pins for 16 years under the Marlex kennel prefix.

Oftentimes, people who make an impulse purchase are not prepared for 18 years of a dog that can go from being a couch potato to 100 miles per hour in the blink of any eye—possibly faster if food is involved. “The first thing I tell every potential Min Pin owner is that if they can't handle the personality of a 2-year-old child on a forever basis, look at other breeds,” says Cheryl O'Brien of Shellamar's Miniature Pinschers in upstate New York, Min Pin owner for 20 years. “Although each individual Min Pin has a number of its own personality traits, they all are quite similar in many ways. Mostly, Min Pins want to please, but they can and do have their moments.”

The American Kennel Club (AKC) description of the Min Pin's temperament, as published in the Miniature Pinscher Club of America (MPCA) Illustrated Breed Guide is “fearless animation, complete self-possession and spirited presence.” The MPCA breed standard goes on to say, “Temperament is an extremely important part of the Min Pin package as Min Pins are fearless, active and alert and should show these traits in the show ring.”

Dave and Sherrie Krogh from West Linn, Oregon, both AKC judges and active Min Pin fanciers since 1964, believe that “the temperament in the Miniature Pinscher lays the foundation for the breed. It must be brave but still have a loving attitude toward other dogs and people.”

However, the same attitude that many breeders look for in a show dog and that I laugh at and call “evil” or “naughty,” may very well be too dominant for the average person looking for a companion animal. This reasoning also explains why many respected breeders keep their puppies for four months or longer before selling them. During this time, they get a better idea of the adult temperament of each puppy and the type of home for which it would be best suited.

A few years ago, for example, I took back Carol, a very dominant female puppy that was too dominant for the 8-year-old child in the house to deal with. During the first week in the home, the dog learned she could intimidate the child and the child became fearful. After careful monitoring of the home situation, I replaced the female with another Min Pin sibling that, while showing all the characteristics of Min Pin attitude, did not have such a dominating personality. Four years later, the replacement Min Pin is great with all children and its family adores it. Carol, the dominant female I took back, has awesome attitude and a commanding presence in the show ring, but to this day, she has absolutely no affection for children. However, if my sister comes into my house, Carol turns to mush and drapes herself around my sister's neck like a fashion accessory. Carol would gladly go to live with my sister, but that's not going to happen until her husband is willing to live in the garage.

Not all Min Pins are bad with children, though. “A Min Pin with a sound temperament has the makings of an excellent



companion. It is fearless, active, animated and always looking for trouble. It is cautious of strangers at first, but warms up quickly, and is good with children who are taught to carefully handle and play with the dog," Angelbello says.