

Pugs

The Pug's energy and friendliness have warmed hearts for centuries.

By Elaine Waldorf Gewirtz

On crisp October days, Pugs dressed as spiders, hot dogs and pirates meet with other costumed Pugs and their owners in cities throughout the United States. What's the occasion? It's Pugtobberfest! Here, these happy-go-lucky little dogs perfect the art of the sniff, the chase and the chill-out with their canine best friends.

Unlike some breeds who don't take kindly to unfamiliar dogs getting personal, Pugs play well with others. When you name the place and set the time, they're ready to party. You'll seldom hear a discouraging word, as Pugs aren't known to utter menacing sounds or show a temper. If anything, they'll let out a whimper and show a little attitude if they're displeased about anything.

Forget the fact that this unusual-looking breed with the squat body, flat face and curled tail bears little resemblance to other dogs with soft expressions, graceful lines and luxurious tails. Pugs have moxie and don't care a whit about appearances.

Fun-loving and loyal, they excel at following their people anywhere, even if it means hanging out at home. "I sit down to read the paper, and I've got three Pugs in my lap," says Charlotte Patterson, president of Pug Dog Club of America (www.pugs.org), an American Kennel Club judge and a breeder with Ivanwold Kennel in Destin, Fla.

The breed's quest for living the good life earned its own motto written right into the PDCA breed standard: *Multum in parvo*. This Latin expression translates to "a lot of dog in a small space." The Pug ideally weighs between 14 and 18 pounds but should appear proportionally square and muscular. Even-tempered and outgoing with a loving disposition, the largest member of the Toy Group draws attention wherever he goes. The Pug's bounty of charm and character — in addition to those wrinkles all rolled into a powerfully built yet compact and petite body — continues to attract as many followers now as it did then.

Unconditional Love

It's no wonder that the Pug's formidable looks, curious appeal and sense of loyalty have endeared him to countless people around the world for centuries. How he chooses to return all that affection testifies to his character. "The Pug's nature is very touchy-feely," Hall says. "Unlike some breeds that must learn how to accept the sensation of human hands making contact with their skin, Pugs live for hands-on attention and love to be petted. They come by that naturally."

For the majority of Pugs, there's no such thing as a stranger. The breed makes an excellent therapy dog for children or adults in any therapeutic setting.

"When it comes to people we meet outside the house, Blackie doesn't act any differently to anyone," says Deborah Smythe of Colorado Springs, Colo., about her Pug. "He seems to like everyone pretty much the same."

Pug puppies aren't bashful about their feelings for newcomers, either. According to Sigi Scholle, PDCA breeder referral chair, the typical Pug personality is friendly and playful, and pups love to give kisses and be held. "Puppies shouldn't be shy or reserved but always playful, and they should want to come to you when you first meet them," Scholle says. "Sit on

the floor with a litter, and the puppies will leap into your lap without an invitation.”

Watch your fingers, however, Scholle warns. “Young pups have sharp baby-teeth, and they might bite your hands. These are happy nips, however, and they would never try to hurt you intentionally.”

Pug puppy love seldom wears off, and the craving for human affection remains constant. “When the doorbell rings, my Pugs fly to the door, convinced that someone is there just to visit them,” Hall says. “They’ll sniff and jump around until the person pays attention to them.”

It’s nothing for a Pug without manners to leap from the floor to the couch in a single bound and to do a belly-body-crawl up to someone’s face. Then it’s kisses, kisses and more kisses. Maybe it’s the combination of a super-sized tongue and the wide-receiver mouth, but for some reason, Pugs never run out of smooches.

These aren’t pouty pecks or butterfly kisses, either. Pug smackers are serious, full-on swamp mushers. “You know when a Pug gives you a lick on the lips because you’ll need a towel,” Smythe says.

Once the love-in begins to wind down, leave it to a Pug to settle into his own comfort zone. To a Pug, this means the crease of your lap, the crook of your arm or the nape of your neck.

Will Love for Food

While Pugs show little favoritism for one family member over another, if you add food into the mix, it becomes another story. Far from picky eaters, these dogs love food more than life itself and will eat anything — anytime, anyplace. A Pug will cozy up to the person who hangs out in the kitchen the most, hoping for a snack or an extra nibble from a sandwich.

This makes it a challenge to keep most Pugs at a healthy weight. “They’re so food-motivated that they always act like they’re starving, no matter how much you feed them,” Hall says. “An overweight Pug is not a healthy dog, and he will have a much harder time moving around and participating in organized dog sports, such as agility. It also contributes to a shorter life span.”

To help maintain their figures and general good health, Patterson recommends that Pug owners provide regular exercise for their dogs. “They need something to keep them engaged so they don’t become slugs around the house,” she says. “A Pug should look as if he’s going somewhere with his head up, tail tightly curled and happily involved in life.”

A daily walk provides good exercise for a Pug but only in cooler weather. Choose a time early in the day or evening for best walking results, as the breed’s short muzzle and flat face predispose the dogs to breathing difficulties and overheating. Take a spritz bottle of water, too.

When traveling, make sure that there’s always fresh air circulating and your dog is protected from the sun. Take along a shade cloth and towels that you can wet down to cool off your dog if he becomes too hot. Never leave your Pug in a closed car.

Because of their top-heavy physique, Pugs aren’t natural swimmers and will sink fast. If you spend a lot of time around a lake or pool and want to give your dog a chance to cool off in the water, buckle him into a doggie life jacket. This provides buoyancy and comes with a handle at the top so you can guide his passage through the water. Once your Pug becomes accustomed, he’ll no doubt enjoy the new experience.

While the Pug might not be an all-weather or all-sports canine, the breed has its own attributes that dog lovers all over the world have cherished for centuries. After one look at his fun-loving expression, you know you’ve been smitten forever by a Pug mug.