

## Shih Tzu

### Discover the breed characteristics of the Shih Tzu.

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**What It Takes to be an Owner****Flexibility:** The person who is owned by a Shih Tzu must be patient and willing to compromise on a regular basis. For example, the person may have rules and the dog might allow the owner to think that it is following the rules, but such behavior will occur only if there is a just reward for the Shih Tzu's compliance. Because your dog's mood and willingness to play along may vary from day to day and possibly even hour to hour, you cannot always rely on the consistency of its behavior. It all depends on how badly your Shih Tzu wants that cookie.

**Firm kindness:** Let's talk about the art of compromise. Training a Shih Tzu is not a fruitless endeavor, despite the challenges. Treated firmly but kindly, the Shih Tzu will most likely have to compromise, as well. A Shih Tzu owner must ask the dog to follow a rule, reward the behavior and consistently reinforce the desired behavior. As an ancient, noble breed, Shih Tzu tend to believe that they know more than the humans with whom they are involved.

**Good sense of humor:** Unless yours is a strange Shih Tzu from a dysfunctional family, it will have an inherent ability to be a goofy entertainer. Sometimes this backfires, and what the dog thought to be amusing doesn't go over very well with its owner, but such times are relatively rare.

**Older than 3:** The Shih Tzu should never be expected to be a live toy for a child who cannot yet walk. Just like puppies, children have to be trained. Specifically, children must to be taught how to hold and handle a puppy and how not to. If little ones visit, it may be a good time for the dog to seek refuge in its crate. The adults must carefully supervise all child-dog interactions.

**Younger than 100:** This is a difficult area. Older people tend to want a lapdog, and that's okay on a part-time basis. It is important to remember though that Shih Tzu are active, bouncy and want to be running around right beside, behind or in front of its owner feet. This is trouble for an older person who might be unsteady or who is using a walker.

**Experienced with dogs:** To live with someone experienced with dogs, small dogs in particular, is a Shih Tzu's dream come true. If the person has owned Shih Tzu in the past, he or she is likely to have the personality traits previously discussed. It is also more likely that he or she is already aware of the special care and needs of the Shih Tzu.

**Special needs:** Many Shih Tzu have problems with eye discharge. In fact, many toy breeds have this problem. The most common cause is a condition called entropion in which the lower eyelid turn inward and the hairs on the lid constantly irritate the eyeball. In addition, sometimes an eye that is too prominent is subject to irritation from dust in the air, as well as hair. In Shih Tzu it is common for the tear ducts to be too small for the amount of tearing and there is an overflow that causes runny eyes. There is then staining or bronzing beneath the eyes, and with hair all over the face it means the tears can collect in the face hair and begin to smell if not cleaned. There is probably no Shih Tzu owner who wants to play kissy with a smelly face, and Shih Tzu do like to kiss you. To ensure your smoochy relationship with a clean-faced Shih Tzu, gently wash its face with warm water on a daily basis. If the eye discharge is excessive, a trip to the vet is in order. There may be a simple medical remedy.

Daily brushing is a necessity, especially if there is longer hair on the ears and legs in one of those adorable designer trim patterns. If the dog is fortunate enough to be cut down into a pet trim, its coat is less likely to form mats and to become unmanageable with ugly tangles. The best of possible worlds is that the owner takes the dog on a regular basis to a professional groomer.

The only consistent and truly special need of the Shih Tzu is to have its own owner to love and adore. When your Shih Tzu lies down with its head on its paws and those beautiful, lustrous eyes gaze at you with full open love in them it is guaranteed that you will melt.