

Pit Bulls: A Guide



Everything you need to know about pit bulls,
and more!

Getting to know the breeds

The term "pit bull" applies to several different breeds of medium-sized fighting terriers originally created through experimental crosses with bulldogs and terriers, originating in the 18th and 19th century Europe and America. The aim of these crosses was to combine the strength and bite of a bulldog with the athleticism, gameness, and courage of a terrier to create an all-purpose farm dog that could catch and drive cattle and hogs, clear the barn of vermin, hunt, and just do miscellaneous frontier era ranching tasks while also being a great family companion and babysitter for the kids. Later, especially after the banning of bull baiting as a sport, the focus was taken off of them as all-purpose farm dogs and they were developed and standardized as the fighting dogs we know them as today. These breeds include:



The American Pit Bull Terrier:

The APBT is what one generally thinks of when they think "pit bull." They are a moderate, medium sized dog that should weigh between 20 and 55 pounds, though the preferred range is probably closer to 35-50 pounds. They are happy, cheerful, athletic, eager to please goofballs that love everyone but can work their butts when called on to do so. This is why they make awesome search and rescue or hunting dogs.

This breed is the original Bull and Terrier, the dog that started it all, created from crosses of old-school bulldogs and English White Terriers and standardized in 1898. The United Kennel Club was the first registry to recognize the American Pit Bull Terrier, and was actually created for the purpose.



The Staffordshire Bull Terrier:

Known as the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Staffy, or Staffie Bull, SBTs are the smallest version of the pit bull; and are basically the UK's APBTs. They are a medium-sized, stocky, and very muscular dog, with a similar appearance to the american staffordshire terrier and american pit bull terrier. They tend to average around 14-17 inches at the shoulder and weigh around 20-30lbs, and are just more compact dogs in general. They are very popular and common in the UK, but until recently they were uncommon in the US. They can have a bit of a stubborn streak, unlike the APBT, which is about the only difference in temperament between the two. They were standardized in 1935 and a parent club was formed, and the first SBTs were brought to America in the 70's.

The Staffordshire Bull Terrier is known for its character of intelligence, fearlessness and loyalty. This, coupled with its affection for its friends, and trustworthy stability, make it a great all-purpose dog. It has been said that "No breed is more loving with its family". The breed is naturally muscular and may look scary. But because of their natural fondness for people, most Staffies are temperamentally ill-suited for guard or attack-dog training. Once you find their motivation (food, toys, etc), they are a breeze to train.

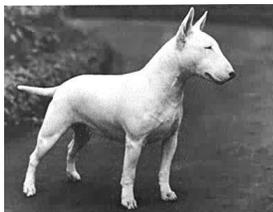


The American Staffordshire Terrier:

The American Staffordshire Terrier (commonly called the Amstaff) began with American Pit Bull Terriers as foundation dogs, with some bulldog and mastiff added in to increase size. They were created in the 1930's almost exclusively for the ring. They tend to be larger (up to 80lbs), stocky, and more blocky in shape.

They carry the same genes as the APBT, which means that they have many similarities. But as the generations pass there has been a trend showing. As the extreme drive is being bred out of the Amstaffs, so is the extreme dog aggression. It can, and will still happen, but it is watered down compared to the American Pit Bull Terrier.

These guys are considered the "show APBT", since the actual APBT is not recognized by the AKC or UKC. These guys are still loving goof balls to their family, but tend to be more serious or stoic towards strangers. Don't be surprised if one is aloof to those outside their family.



The Bull Terrier:

Bull-and-Terriers - crosses between Bulldogs and various terriers - gained popularity among the sporting fraternity during the early 1800s. These crosses combined the determination and courage of the Bulldog with the natural agility and intensity of the terrier. They ranged in size and color, some showing more Bulldog heritage, while others were more terrier-like.

During the early 1860s, James Hinks of Birmingham, England developed the breed we know today as the Bull Terrier. The Bull Terrier became popular with owners as both show dogs and exceptional pets and companions. Soon their popularity spread across the Atlantic, with the Bull Terrier Club of America being established in 1897.

Given their muscular build and oft-times diabolical expression the Bull Terrier can appear quite unapproachable. To the contrary they are an exceedingly friendly dog, thriving on affection and always ready for a frolic. The Bull Terrier is one of the clowns of the canine race, robust and spirited, yet of a sweet and fun-loving disposition. Though, as with all of the other bull-and-terrier breeds, they can be scrappy with other dogs as they mature.



The American Bully:

The American Bully is a new type of dog established in the mid-2005s through breeding between American Pit Bull Terriers, Staffordshire Terriers, English Bulldogs, as well as Mastiffs, and other breeds which have not been disclosed. They vary in size and shape more than the American Pit Bull Terrier. They tend to be big headed, low to the ground, and wide chested. Some are more leggy, while others' chests nearly brush the ground.

The American Bully is the most controversial of the pit bull family, because of its background and the way they are publicized. They started as a color pattern gimmick, with back yard breeders wanting to make money off of a "rare" color. In the making of the American Staffordshire Terrier, mastiff had been tossed in. Along with that came the silvery-grey coat pattern that's called blue. These breeders bred Amstaffs to pit bulls to create a "RARE BLUE PIT BULL!". Since the two breeds are so similar, it worked! At least for a while.

These same breeders wanted the pit bull to look bigger and tougher. Gotti and Razor's edge are the two most notorious American Bully bloodlines that popularized the image of pitbulls as tough, badass, mean looking dogs. This breed is also almost always confused for the American Pit Bull Terrier, mostly because quite a few breeders sell them as "pit bulls". This breed of dog also suffers from many health and joint ailments do to how they are bred. These dogs have had the bite inhibition that the American Pit Bull Terrier has bred out, and are closer in temperament to their mastiff roots.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What do “Blue nose” and “Red nose” mean? Are they different breeds of pit bull?

"Bluenose" and "Rednose" dogs are simply dogs with blue or red noses. They are not a different "type" or "breed" of APBT, and nose color has absolutely no bearing on working ability, or fighting ability, and in no way affect the temperament or quality of the dog despite what gimmicky Back yard breeders would have you believe.

It started as another gimmick, like the blue coat color. There is a line of American Pit Bull Terriers called Old Family Red Nose, or OFRN. They are an old line of solid, nicely built working pit bulls. Most of them happened to have red noses, but there were also dogs with other color noses. They were not bred for the color of their nose. Back yard breeders got a hold of the line, and started breeding “red nose pit bulls”. Others started labeling theirs “blue nose pit bulls”. The rest is history.

So what's all this hype about pit bulls being vicious?

The American Pit Bull Terrier was selectively bred for bite inhibition towards humans. There are very, very few breeds of dogs that have that going for them when it comes to human aggression. Pit fighting dogs were bred to be highly dog aggressive, but spent most of their life as household pets that played with the kids, and just hung out most of the time. Several old school fighting books mention the number of fights a given dog was in, and even some of the most well-known dogs were only fought 3-5 times in their lives- and the rest of their 12+ years were spent at home, being good family pets. Human aggression was never, ever, EVER tolerated for these dogs.

In pit fighting, 2 human handlers and a referee or two are constantly in the pit with the dogs, handling them, pulling them apart to reposition bites, separating them and allowing them to scratch again, sticking their hands in their mouths to separate them...and all of this had to be done without getting bitten. Any dog that bit a handler, at any point, for any reason, even during the heat of a fight, was swiftly dealt with and usually shot on the spot. And so, those dogs were not bred- only the dogs with **enormous** control and bite inhibition passed on their genes. Pit bulls were never, ever used for human guard work because they were supposed to exhibit zero human aggression. A real, decently bred APBT is almost incapable of biting a human.

The problem we have now is that of idiots back yard breeding oversized dogs while having zero knowledge of the breed and what it stands for, breeding dogs of poor temperament, and breeding in mastiffs, american bulldogs, and other breeds that ARE used for human guard work, destroying a couple of hundred years of hard work to get this breed to the point where it never, ever bit humans. They're thugs that want the meanest, toughest, most vicious dog they can get, because THEY have fallen into the trap the media has set for pit bulls and bought into the "oh my god they eat babies" mind set- and so perpetuate everything negative that has ever been said about this breed.

These same people then don't socialize their dogs, torment them to make them "mean," chain them to a 10 pound logging chain, and leave them in a backyard somewhere to half starve and suffer. APBTs are insanely people oriented, and are high energy dogs- and if you take an unneutered pit bull, chain it in a backyard, never talk to it, never play with it, never exercise it, and never feed it...you very quickly end up

with a sexually frustrated, angry, miserable, neurotic dog that has basically gone insane from lack of stimulation, lack of food, and lack of exercise. You have a recipe for disaster that was entirely created by stupid breeders and stupid owners.

What most media articles fail to leave out is that most fatal dog bites involve the following: (This is ALL fatal dog bites, not just ones reported as pit bulls)

- Unneutered male dogs
- That are left chained for long periods of time
- Are usually malnourished, parasite ridden, and otherwise ill
- Are all but completely un-socialized
- Are poorly bred

AND:

- They usually involve an unsupervised child
- Left alone with said hungry, miserable, emotionally starved dog
- Dog finally escapes its chain
- Dog goes nuts from years of misery, confinement, probable beatings, and near starvation
- Dog bites kid whose negligent parents should go to jail for leaving it alone with said dog in the first place. (And, if they are owners of the dog, for treating their dog in such a manner.)
- Media flips out because some random abused short haired dog bites a kid, calls it a pit bull, and a it causes a huge uproar.

Okay, maybe they start out as nice dogs, but don't they have a tendency to just SNAP? They're really unpredictable, right?

A pit bull may suddenly decide it no longer likes other dogs, but other than that, no. What's more likely happening in these scenarios is that the owner of the dog is either not present at the time of the bite, or not adept enough at reading dog body language to see the warning signs the dog is giving off. Pit bulls are very stable, predictable, easy to read dogs and they do not just "lose it" for no reason, especially not on a human.

Wait, dog aggression? Prey drive? Isn't aggression just AGGRESSION?

Nope. Dogs can differentiate between species just fine. As stated above, pit bulls are bred to have exceptional bite inhibition with humans while maintaining a propensity towards aggression with other dogs and the desire to chase and catch prey animals. A dog suddenly becoming dog aggressive or overly prey driven is NOT an indicator that they will later develop human aggression. The three are not linked.

If pit bulls are dog aggressive and have strong prey drive, can I ever safely own one if I have other pets?

Yes. Most people with a dog aggressive dog crate and rotate, and NEVER leave their dogs alone together uncrated. A lot of people with pits in general do this by default, whether the dogs in question are dog aggressive or not. They can play together- but if you have to leave the house or cannot keep an eye on them, one of them needs to be crated or they need to be somehow separated- dog aggressive dogs must also never be fed together.

It is never safe to leave a highly prey driven dog alone with a prey animal, but they can be taught to tolerate and ignore prey animals indoors, with the owners around. It can be done, but it does take some vigilance to insure that the two are not left alone together. Some pit bulls never develop dog aggression or strong prey drive, but most have both to at least SOME degree.

The only really limiting thing is that dog parks are out of the question for pit bulls. Just don't do it; too many potential problems, too much room for error.

If you own a pit bull and another dog, you SHOULD learn how to break up a fight, as there is a good chance a scuffle of some sort will happen sooner or later.

If you are not scared off by now, I commend you! Now, why after all of that does anyone want to keep a pit bull?

The answer is simple. These dogs are amazing. These dogs will give their all to you – their heart, their soul. They will do anything you ask. Their never quit attitude is something that has no equal. These dogs will literally do whatever you command until you tell them to stop, or they physically cannot do it any longer. They have courage that is second to none. Because of that, these breeds excel in activities such as search and rescue. Hours after other dogs have given up, or stopped because of weather conditions, pit bulls won't stop until they find that person. They are gentle souls, and make awesome candidates for therapy or service work.

While human aggressive pit bulls were actively culled from bloodlines, traits such as gentleness, temperamental stability, and the desire to be handled by humans were emphasized. These qualities are the foundation of the "pit bull" breeds. It explains why footage of pit bulls being rescued from horrific circumstances usually features skinny, scarred-up dogs with wagging tails and happy tongues joyfully greeting law enforcement officers.

Their love for humans is so deeply driven into them, that it takes acts of such horrible cruelty to make them fear people. The dogs from the Michael Vick case are perfect examples – many of them passed temperament tests and became perfectly stable pets. Many of them became service or therapy dogs. If you want a dog who thinks you are their everything, who is sad when you are sad, who knows your every mood and changes their behavior to try to make everything better – then these dogs are for you.

Sadly, owning one of these dogs always makes you a target of ridicule. Only a special kind of person can own a pit bull. You have to be hard hearted but kind at the same time. You have to learn to take the insults and ignorance in stride, while educating the public wherever you go. Owning one of these breeds will open your eyes to how much prejudice is alive today.

When you decide to bring a pit bull breed into your home, you become an ambassador for them. The first step is learning as much as you can about the breed, and becoming a responsible owner.

What is a responsible pit bull owner? How can I be one?

A responsible Pit bull owner:

- 1.) Spays or neuters their dog.
- 2.) Understands dog aggression and prey drive in relation to the breed and what it means for their dog and how it must be handled.
- 3.) Understands dog body language and is prepared for and knows how to break up a dog fight.
- 4.) Obtains their dog from a rescue or a responsible breeder.
- 5.) Does not take their pit bull to dog parks.
- 6.) Does not leave their dog alone with prey animals or other dogs.
- 7.) Always leashes their dog in public.
- 8.) Obedience trains their dog and teaches it good manners for interacting with people and other animals out in public using positive training methods.
- 9.) Educates others, when possible, about the truth about pit bulls and what is happening to the breed.

Always being prepared and having a plan is also important.

Crate and Rotate: A measure to prevent fights in the first place:

Perhaps you acquired same-sex pit bulls that, upon maturity, no longer tolerate each other. Maybe you have a multi-dog household, and two or more of your dogs have recently been fighting. Or you recently added a pit bull to your home, and it just isn't working out with the other dogs. Whatever the reason, by employing the use of 'Crate and Rotate' in your home you will be able to safely manage your pets and maintain them in your home. A pet is a lifetime commitment; re-homing should be a last resort. Dog aggression is common among Pit Bulls and other bully breed dogs, and it is important to recognize this behavior for what it really is, and accept the reality that this breed has selectively been bred to be aggressive towards other dogs.

How to Use Crate and Rotate:

Many dog owners crate and rotate their dogs in multiple dog homes, and this is especially common in fostering situations. If your dog is not currently crate trained, now is the time to get started – this can be done at any age and size, but the sooner, the better. When using crating, it is important that you get your dog accustomed to the crate and never use the crate for punishment. Crating is an excellent way for you to protect your dog's health and keep him/her safe, and it should never be used as a form of punishment for your dog. You should always view crating as part of positive, responsible ownership. If you are crating, make sure you invest in durable crates, as well as tough toys and chew items that your dog can enjoy while he/she is being crated. Remember, you want the dog to view the crate as a positive place, and you also want the dog to easily follow your cue to be crated.

Dogs should not be crated for an overly lengthy period of time; 4-8 hours is generally recommended as a maximum for crating. Some owners who crate and rotate also find that it is beneficial to feed the dogs in their crates; feeding in crates not only helps the dogs to associate the crate with something positive (meal time), but it also helps reduce the possibility of a fight occurring over resources. "Trigger" items such as bones, stuffed Kongs, rawhides, etc. should be given only in the crates. Many dogs consider these to be high-value items and worth fighting for.

Depending on your household schedule and routine, you will need to come up with a system that fits your family's needs. It is important to make everyone in your household aware of this new crate and rotate schedule and get them to be involved as much as possible. Expect weeks or months to pass before finding a routine that works well with everyone. Once you establish that routine, be sure to stick to it. Dogs like routine, and will learn the new system faster if you are consistent. Developing a consistent routine can include: identifying which crates you will use for which dogs, identifying where the crates are, determining which rooms they have access to, having scheduled times when they are out, having scheduled feeding times, etc.

If you have more than two dogs, it will be helpful to determine if any of them can be grouped together appropriately. Knowing which dogs can be rotated with each other will also be an important part of the crate and rotate routine. You may find that your dogs need to be rotated separately for all activities including feeding, exercise, and time with you, or you might find that if you have multiple dogs that get along well together for feeding, exercise and spending time with the family.

It is important for all dogs part of a crate and rotate program to receive both obedience training and adequate exercise. Dogs who are trained in basic obedience will be easier to manage within the home, and exercise helps keep your dogs fit both mentally and physically. Canine exercise also burns off excess energy which can help reduce anxiety and tension, making their time in the crate more relaxed and pleasant for everyone involved.

A nice alternative to crate-and-rotate is using baby gates. If both dogs can respect the gate, then you can split your house into sections with the gates. That way, both dogs can be left out while you are home. **Do NOT leave them in their sections if you have to leave – they should always be crated when you are not home!**

Not all Pit Bulls are dog aggressive. There are many successful multiple bully and pit bull homes out there, but a responsible owner should always watch out for signs of aggression and separate their dogs if the need arises. If you are not prepared for this situation happening, do not get two pit bulls.

How to introduce your pit bull to another dog:

Parallel leash-walking, on neutral territory with two handlers, is a great way to introduce dogs of any breed! Neutral territory means an area where neither dog has been or where neither dog resides. An unfamiliar, neutral territory is best to avoid territorial behavior in either dog. Both dogs should be wearing properly fitted collars and be on nylon or leather leashes. Prong collars, choke chains, and Flexi-leads should not be used when introducing pit bulls. While taking a short walk, allow the dogs to curve around in a natural manner. Avoid face-face, head-on introductions between dogs. Instead, walk parallel to each other, a few feet apart, and alternate which dog is ahead of the other.

Also, do not allow a dog to greet another dog if he/she is dragging you towards the other dog or is misbehaving in any way (pulling, jumping, or lunging). Doing so will result in training the dog to misbehave to gain access to other dogs! The dog does not make the decision as to whom he will meet and when. You do! If the dogs appear to be friendly to each other, allow brief sniffing with one dog perpendicular or "T-shaped" to the other, and then each dog should be called away by the handlers. If either dog stiffens, stands up on its toes, or shows any aggressive posturing, call the dogs away

immediately and interrupt the interaction. It is important to interrupt before things go wrong so that you can preserve the possibility of a successful interaction at a later time. It might be necessary to take several walks, in different locations, over time. Multiple introductions in this manner give you a better read for how the dogs will do. Do not rush this process if the introductions seem 'iffy' in any way. Stop the introduction if either dog is showing signs of fear or aggression. Body language that indicates fear or aggression can include: raised hackles, stiff posturing, lip curling, growling, air snapping, tail tucked between legs, one dog avoiding the other or wanting to hide behind the handler, lunging, or freezing.

If the leash walking is successful, it may then be appropriate to go to a fenced area and have one dog on leash, and one off. One handler might work obedience with the leashed dog, while letting the other dog roam around, allowing them to get used to each other's presence and scent. Usually in this scenario, the resident dog is loose, and the new dog is leashed. This gives one dog the ability to safely check things out and move away as needed while you maintain control of the other dog. Make sure the yard or fenced area is free of items that may possibly trigger a fight such as high-value toys, bones, rawhides, etc. When introducing dogs on leash, make sure that the leashes do not become tangled. Entangled leashes can increase tension and result in a conflict between dogs.

Additional Tips:

Make sure you know different types of canine behaviors: resource guarding, barrier frustration, same-sex aggression, territorial aggression, etc. Any of these behaviors in either dog can complicate an introduction. Brief, repeated introductions over time that end on a positive note are far more beneficial than a long, drawn-out introduction that may become problematic. Once you are off on the wrong paw with a bully introduction, it's hard to 'undo' it. Better to go slow and be successful! Remember, it's always easier to prevent a fight than to break one up! Never trust a pit bull not to fight. Always supervise and remain relaxed but vigilant.

In conclusion:

I thank you for wanting to help a pit bull by bringing one into your home. I hope that this packet can help ease the transition for both you and your new dog. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns you have!

Other resources I urge you to read are:

The Pit Bull Placebo (available online for free!)

Fight!: A Practical Guide to the Treatment of Dog-dog Aggression by Jean Donaldson.

www.badrap.com

<http://www.workingpitbull.com/>

<http://www.pitbullforum.com>

<http://www.pitbull-chat.com>