

These Dogs Are Stealing People's Hearts – If You Don't Have One yet, Head to Your Local Shelter

They started as an effort to create a hypoallergenic breed. Though that didn't succeed, the resulting breeds were good-natured, fun-loving, mild-tempered and over-bred. And became so wildly popular that you now see them everywhere - maybe even in your home?

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Doodle dogs originated with a cross between a standard or miniature poodle and a Labrador, with the appropriate name of labradoodle
- Just like humans, doodle dogs can take on any one or several combinations of characteristics depending on the breed they're progeny of; that is, part poodle mixed with Labrador, golden retriever, Aussie or other doodle mix
- Some people have been told that doodle dogs are hypoallergenic, but while some dogs produce fewer allergens than others, every dog has them, since they reside in dander, aka dead skin cells, saliva and urine
- As with any breed, whether a mix or purebred dog, buyers must beware, as doodles include the goldendoodle, Aussiedoodles, borderdoodles, golden mountain doodles, maltipoos, schnoodles, affenpoos and jackipoos, all of which can be found in abundance at local animal shelters and rescue organizations

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Over the past several years, an adorable dog breed has been seen taking over an increasing number of dog parks, walking trails and — it must be said — people's hearts.

Doodle dogs originated with a cross between a standard or miniature poodle and a Labrador, with the superbly apropos name of labradoodle. What followed in the dog-crossing world became a flurry of poodle mixes with other good-natured, fun-loving and mild-tempered "designer" dogs.

Labradoodle is the most popular, but there's also the goldendoodle, a mix between a poodle and a golden retriever; Aussiedoodles, involving an Australian shepherd; and borderdoodles, a border collie mix. There are many mixes that are more obscure, such as a golden mountain doodle, which is a mix between a golden retriever, a bernese mountain dog and a poodle.

You'll also run across the occasional maltipoo (Maltese and toy or miniature poodle mix), schnoodle (half being a miniature schnauzer), affenpoos (an affenpinscher-poodle mix) or jackipoos (with a Jack Russell terrier).

From the moment they appeared on the scene, everyone loved them, as they seem to come with a fairly consistent standard in the way of behavior and temperament, which nearly every owner would describe, besides the earlier mentioned adjectives, as smart, sociable and highly trainable. And cute. They're also watchdog capable, but as more than one owner has conceded, doodles are so approachable they may take to whoever sets foot on your property. Vet Street notes:

"Their activity level ranges from laid-back to active. They are good watchdogs but don't count on them to be aggressive toward burglars — they're typically more likely to show an intruder around and then suggest a game of fetch. Individual Doodles have been described as slightly lazy, goofy, mildly stubborn, easy to train and eager to please.

With so many different crosses, it's important to know the personality types of both parent breeds so you can have some idea of what you might expect from your pup."¹

Things You May Expect With Doodle Dogs

Like many dogs, they come in a variety of colors, including white, apricot, chocolate, black, cream and "particolor," which is one of the above colors plus white. Altogether, doodles are a very sought-after pet for individuals, families, young or old, and at least one — a goldendoodle named Arson (who's all black rather than golden) — was adopted by an entire firehouse in Provo, Utah.² It's all about the breed when it comes to describing a doodle dog.

One thing that's generally accepted is that one side of the equation is a miniature or standard poodle, the latter whose general tendencies include a height of 10 to 15 inches, weighing in at 40 to 55 pounds. The tendencies of these popular dogs have a definite influence on the type of doodle dog its offspring will be, so that needs to be taken into consideration. Poodles can be described as very social, very intelligent, affectionate, child-friendly and adaptable.

Personality-wise, they may exhibit a stubborn streak, but they're also happy and friendly and sometimes goofy little clowns who seem to like being center stage. Vet Street notes these popular pups' "prissy" haircuts, featuring poms in odd places that sometimes unfairly designates them as "frou-frou" (read: "heavily decorated or fancy"), originated for a very practical purpose. Being duck hunting dogs originally, poodles needed longer hair on their chests, head and leg joints to keep them warm.

Somehow, the exaggerated cut became a "thing." Nowadays, they're nearly always designated solely for the show ring, however. Poodles generally enjoy being part of a family, whether that means watching TV or hitting the beach. They just like being around their favorite people and will sometimes wander through the house looking for someone to hang out with. Early training is important, though; otherwise, your poodle might try being king of your castle.

Differences in Doodle Dogs

The top three doodle breeds seem to represent a popular mix for the most desirable doodle dogs. It seems to be a winning combination a large percentage of the time, which explains why they're so popular. Some of the most prevalent characteristics of each of them include:

- **Labradoodles**³ — Great companions, these dogs become attached to their family members and are easy to instruct (as with many dogs, positive reinforcement and consistent reinforcement are key). These dogs are athletic, enjoying daily rigorous exercise, including walks, agility courses and obedience training.

- **Goldendoodles**⁴ — Like both of his parent breeds, this dog possesses more than the average intelligence, is quite friendly and highly social and may enjoy regular exercise. Depending on whether they're standard, medium or miniature, they can weigh as little as 15 pounds or as much as 100 pounds. They also tend to be accepting of cats, kids and other dogs, and even humans they're not used to.
- **Aussiedoodles**⁵ — Considered a super-smart crossbreed, these dogs can weigh between 25 and 70 pounds. They're very affectionate and adaptable to new situations, and need a large amount of daily physical and mental exercise. As an instinctive herding dog, they may be bossy in trying to keep people, especially kids, together.

This cross requires a lifelong commitment to a tremendous amount of physical exercise and environmental enrichment on the part of the owner, including nose work, interactive puzzles and brain games and physical sports (agility, rally obedience, etc.).

Are Doodle Dogs Really Hypoallergenic? Don't Get Your Hopes Up

One of the reasons the mix was developed by a veterinarian in Australia was his hope to meet the needs of dog lovers with a desire — or need — for a hypoallergenic, aka non-shedding and unlikely to cause an allergic reaction, assistance dog. The idea of a “hypoallergenic” dog with such an adorable name sent a number of people in search of one of their own. But Vet Street explains:

“Don't be fooled: Doodles do shed (although some may drop less hair than other dogs), and they aren't truly hypoallergenic. Fact is, there's no such thing as a hypoallergenic dog (or cat). Allergens are carried in dander (dead skin cells), saliva and urine, so they're impossible to escape. It is true that some dogs produce fewer allergens than others, but you can't assume that Doodle dogs across the board won't set off allergies if you or a family member suffers from them.”⁶

I have found my clients may appreciate the general reduction of overall hair that comes with some of these popular mix breeds, but sadly many of the dogs themselves suffer from terrible allergies. So while they may be better than other breeds for humans that have allergies, I've found that they themselves suffer from a myriad of skin and coat issues.

Depending on the gene pool of their combined parents, doodles may have different types of fur; it might be long and wavy, long and silky, slightly wavy, wispy, tightly curled like wool or any combination of the above, which can be more or less high maintenance.

But like any other dog with fur that looks better when it's groomed, brush your doodle's coat every few days and schedule a professional groomer every two or three months to stay on top of problems, especially since doodle fur can be heavy and dense and take as long as two hours to blow dry after getting a bath!

Health Tendencies and Rescuing a Dandy Doodle for Your Household

Depending on the family breeds crossed, doodles may live up to 12 or 15 years, but not always. Because of the popularity of these mixed breeds, unethical breeders and puppy mills have capitalized on people's desire to have one and are producing lots of genetically unhealthy puppies.

Additionally, people assume these dogs have “hybrid vigor,” or more genetic resiliency because their genepools are a blend of two different breeds, but most vets, including myself, will attest this isn’t the case. They’re still susceptible to diseases and disorders found in their parent breeds, such as:

- Heart disease, caused by abnormal blood flow within the heart, usually involving the heart valves
- **Hip dysplasia**, a condition in which the ball-and-socket joint of the dog’s hip is malformed
- **Genetic eye problems**, which could mean cataracts, lens luxation, progressive retinal atrophy or several other disorders dogs sometimes have
- Gastric torsion, bloat or twisted bowel disorder, evidenced by excessive air in their belly and abdominal pain along with unproductive vomiting

As with any breed, whether a mix or purebred dog, potential pet parents must investigate all aspects of the dog they’re thinking of bringing home. Alternet⁷ notes there are breeders (I will add LOTS of bad breeders, in my opinion) out there who may use the same miniature poodle or even cockapoo (a cocker spaniel and poodle combo that looks like a miniature poodle) to create a doodle that is not dandy, and maybe even a high-strung, not altogether healthy Frankenstein breed.

I strongly recommend you don’t support these individuals by buying puppies from them. Visit your local rescue organizations and go with an open mind that your doodle may come with a mix of personality traits. When it comes to doodle dogs, Vet Street quips that they can be “a bit of a genetic wild card,” and I couldn’t agree more. As with all breeds, sometimes the mother’s tendencies will seem to be passed down, and sometimes the father’s.

With that in mind, remember that dogs are dogs, and with these popular “mutts,” there isn’t a breed standard, so keeping expectations in check is important. With a lot of love, healthy food and adequate training, your new rescue will be the canine companion — a cute, cuddly one, at that — you’ve always wanted.

Sources and References

^{1,4} [Vet Street Goldendoodles 2001-2017](#)

² [Daily Herald December 29, 2016](#)

³ [Vet Street Labradoodles July 15, 2016](#)

⁵ [Vet Street Aussiedoodles 2001-2017](#)

⁶ [Vet Street March 20, 2017](#)

⁷ [Alternet March 4, 2014](#)
