

DID YOU KNOW?

- Pit bulls are commonly used as therapy dogs.
- Pit bulls are great with kids, the reason they are often called “nanny dogs.”
- Pit bulls are used in search and rescue work and often serve as narcotic and bomb sniffing dogs. One pit bull, Popsicle (named that because he was found in an old freezer), has the largest recorded single drug find in Texas history.
- Pit bulls are not human aggressive. They are gentle and loving. As with any breed, individuals can have behavior problems.
- Pit bulls score an 83.4% passing rate with the American Temperament Test Society. That’s better than the popular Border Collie, a breed who scores 79.6%. (pitbulllovers.com and atts.org/stats1.html)
- Some of the most famous dogs in U.S. history were pit bulls: Stubby, the most decorated United States war dog; Petey, the beloved mascot from Little Rascals; and Helen Keller’s faithful companion.



MYTH BUSTERS

“Pit bulls have locking jaws.”

A pit bull’s jaws are functionally the **same as the jaws of any other breed**—proven during expert examination by researchers at the University of Georgia, among others.

“Pit bulls don’t feel pain.”

Pit bulls have the same nervous system of any other breed, and **they can and do feel pain**. Just like other dogs, they also have a highly developed emotional system and do feel happiness, loneliness and boredom.

“Pit bulls attack more people than any other breed.”

Dogs referred to as “pit bulls” in statistical reports are actually a variety of breeds and mixes all lumped together under the “pit bull” name. Also, few people can properly identify a true pit bull, so misidentified dogs add to the statistics. Considering these factors, **the actual number of attacks attributable to American Pit Bull Terriers is considerably lower than represented**. Also, given the extreme popularity and high numbers of pit bulls and pit bull-type breeds, it’s only logical to assume that a breed with the higher number of dogs would be represented with a higher number of bites.

“Pit bulls ‘turn’ on their owners.”

Dogs, as a species, do not perform behaviors “just because.” There are always reasons for behavior, and when aggression becomes a problem **the reasons can be improper handling, lack of socialization or training, a misreading of dog behavior by the owner** or, rarely, disease. Aggression in dogs follows specific patterns. First occur warning signs, then more warning signs and finally, when those signs are continually ignored or misinterpreted, the dog may resort to using its teeth. When owners are startled by a sudden, aggressive outburst, it’s because they’ve been **unaware of problems that were brewing**. This is true of all dogs, not just pit bulls.

“Pit bulls are only good for dog fighting.”

Unfortunately, much attention focuses on the fact that some breeders use the pit bull for fighting other dogs. Because the breed has excelled at this task, many assume fighting is all it’s good for. Truth is: **the pit bull is one of the most versatile of canines, capable of excelling at just about any task its owner asks it to complete**. This breed is routinely used for obedience training, conformation showing, weight pull, agility, search and rescue work, and police and armed services work. But fans of the pit bull will argue that the task this breed performs best of all is that of beloved companion.

Information is gathered from the following sources: aspc.org, pitbulllovers.com, pitbull-apbt.com and realpitbull.com.



For
PIT's
sake

YOUR GUIDE

to the common traits,
behaviors and training
needs of a pit bull



WHAT IS A "PIT BULL?"

The term "pit bull" refers to the **American Pit Bull Terrier**, a purebred dog recognized by the United Kennel Club (UKC) and American Dog Breeders Association (ADBA). Brought to the U.S. from England and Ireland in the 1800s, pit bulls are among the oldest of breeds, originally bred as working dogs for use in ranching and hunting. Today, the nickname "pit bull" is widely, and incorrectly, used to describe dogs with characteristics similar to that of the American pit bull, such as the Staffordshire bull terrier and American bulldog.

A well-bred, well-socialized and well-trained pit bull is one of the most loving, intelligent and gentle dogs imaginable.

WHAT'S A PIT BULL LIKE?

Essential traits are **strength, intelligence, confidence and zest for life**. This breed is enthusiastic, eager to please, willing to work and—despite the unfair press it receives—a loving and protective companion. Pit bulls are known to adore children and make excellent family dogs. Because of the breed's powerful physique and high energy, it requires an owner who will carefully socialize and obedience train it as well as provide plenty of exercise. The dog's natural agility makes it a good climber, so proper fencing is a must. Pit bulls are usually a poor choice for guard dogs since they're **very friendly, even with strangers**. Aggressive behavior toward humans is uncharacteristic.

ARE PIT BULLS GENETICALLY PROGRAMMED TO BE AGGRESSIVE?

Some breeders have genetically selected the pit bull for its fighting ability. This doesn't mean that a pit bull can't be around other dogs, is unpredictably aggressive or will fight to the death. Any type of dog can become aggressive and cause problems if its owner fails to socialize, train and supervise it. Sadly, like the German shepherd in the '50s and '60s, and later the Doberman, **the pit bull has become today's "fad breed" with macho, high risk owners**. Pit bulls are exploited by backyard breeders, dog fighters and others who abuse the breed's amazing strengths for their own selfish gain.

WHAT PIT BULLS NEED

If you have, or are thinking of adopting a pit bull, please ensure you can provide:

- **Early socialization with dogs and people**, beginning at the age of seven weeks and continuing into adulthood.
- **Training**, starting with puppy training and progressing through basic and advanced obedience. Continued guidance throughout the dog's life is highly recommended.
- **Lots of daily exercise!** Pit bulls are high-energy athletes.
- **Neutering or spaying**—there are already too many pit bulls and not enough homes for them.
- **Constant attention to the dog's behavior**. Questionable behavior can't be excused and must be addressed immediately through training and management.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A PIT BULL

A well-bred, well-socialized and well-trained pit bull is one of the most loving, intelligent and gentle dogs imaginable. **The majority of pit bulls are still ambassadors for their breed**, serving as loving family members and therapy dogs, and working in search and rescue and narcotics detection. Pit bulls easily live 10-15 years, so make sure you're ready for this kind of a commitment before you get a dog (most pit bulls are sadly "given away" between the age of 9 to 18 months). As long as you understand your pit bull's needs, you can expect a fun, smart and devoted companion for years to come.

