

Should I share my apartment with a dog?

A guide to apartment living for you and your dog



Contents

Responsibility

Considerations

Dogs with lower exercise requirements

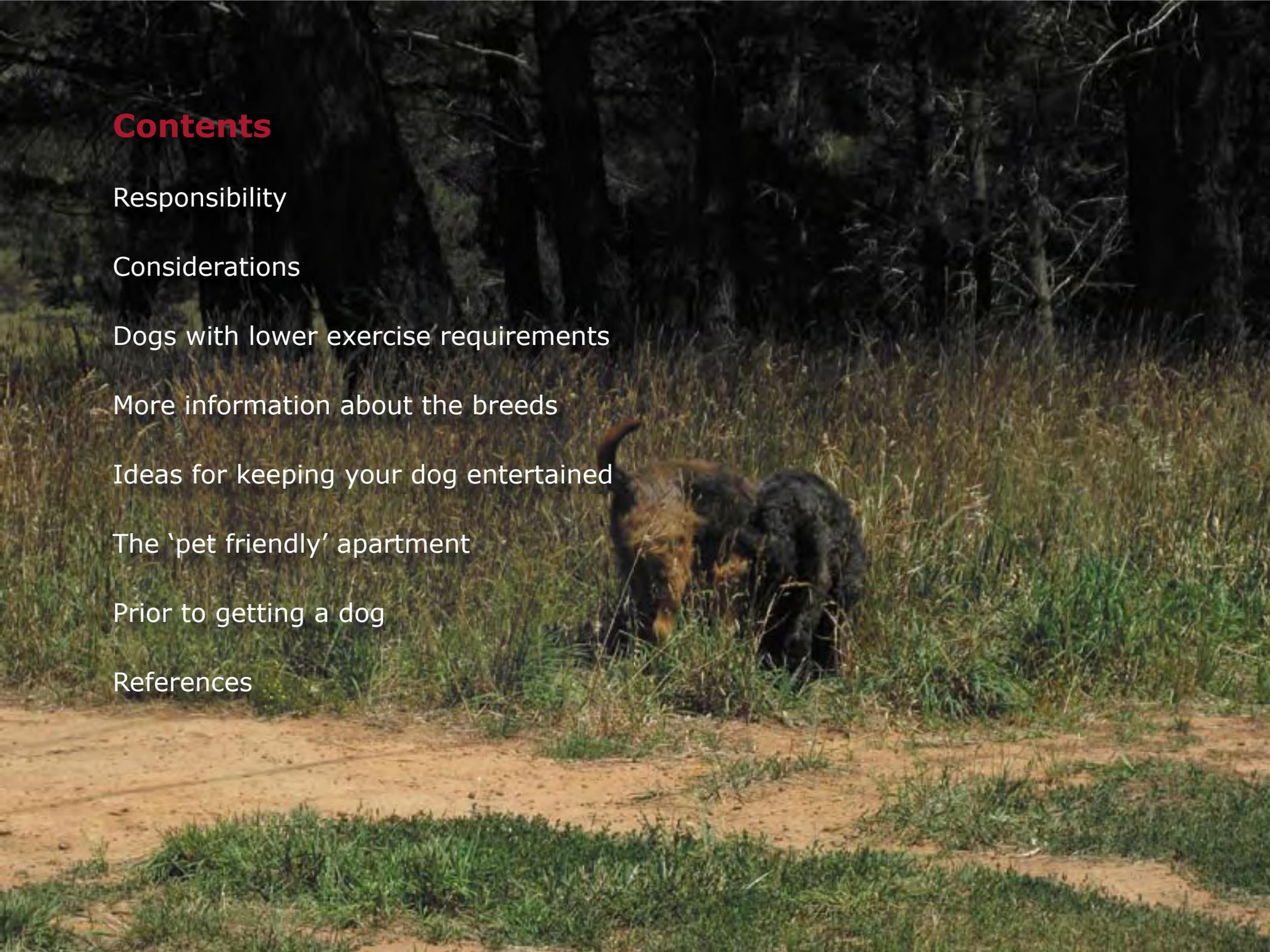
More information about the breeds

Ideas for keeping your dog entertained

The 'pet friendly' apartment

Prior to getting a dog

References



Responsibility

Dogs offer wonderful companionship, but that comes with responsibility. A dog can live from 8–18+ years (depending on the breed). It is the owner's responsibility to exercise, train and socialise their dog. This is a huge time commitment that does not take holidays!

Dogs are social animals and are not suited to being left alone for long periods. Getting a second dog to keep the other dog company is not a logical solution – you could make the problem twice as bad for yourself and your neighbours.

Most of the common dog problems (barking, digging, chewing, escaping, destructiveness and boisterous behaviour) can be prevented if you walk your dog morning and evening, play with your dog and provide it with some basic training.

If you meet your dog's mental and physical needs before you leave for work, the dog is far more likely to settle and not get into trouble due to boredom.



Considerations

If you live in an apartment and are thinking of getting a dog, the most important considerations are:

- ▶ **How energetic is the breed of dog.**
The lower the energy level, the easier to manage in a smaller area. You will still need to walk and provide an area of 'free play' each day no matter where you live. Training and leaving your dog with things to do while you are away will help keep the dog occupied.
- ▶ **What is the noise level of the breed.**
Some breeds are far more vocal than others. In an apartment with neighbours close by, you should look at the breeds who are not known as 'barkers'. Some breeds are also generally more noise sensitive – they would not be a wise choice in a busy urban area.
- ▶ **Is the breed of dog you are considering okay with strangers.** Guard dog breeds are more likely to be vocal when people come and go from apartments. Dogs that have not been thoroughly socialised and are not familiar and totally relaxed with their surroundings may also 'alert' bark.
- ▶ **How old is the dog.** Puppies are a huge time investment, so consider the age of the dog as well as the breed.
- ▶ **What laws are in place regarding pet ownership in the apartment in which you are living.** Regulations vary greatly. Some complexes will accept dogs up to a certain body weight, others have stipulations about the number of dogs you can keep. You will need to research the body corporate requirements and make sure you have written permission from this authority to proceed before you get a dog.
- ▶ **Allergy sufferers.** Are any members of the household likely to suffer an allergic reaction to the dog. If so, you will need to consider the non-shedding breeds and get all household members to meet and hold the dog prior to taking it home.
- ▶ **How energetic are you.** After a day at work do you have the energy to then take your dog out for exercise. Can you make time before you go to work to go out with your dog.

Considerations (continued)

- **Talk with your neighbours.** Letting your neighbours know you are thinking of getting a dog is advisable. If you can start off on an amicable footing, life should be more pleasant.
- **Is the apartment suitable.** There may be gaps under the balcony where a small dog could fit. These will need to be fixed so that the dog does not fall through. If you live in a high-rise apartment you will want a dog that you can comfortably pick up and carry. A Great Dane living in a 6th floor apartment is going to be problematic.
- **Research thoroughly.** There are many websites which will outline the breed characteristics of each breed. You need to select a dog breed to match your lifestyle – no matter where you live.

Have a look at
www.dogbreedinfo.com/apartment.htm

Talk to people who live in apartments and who own a dog.



Dogs with lower exercise requirements*

No matter where you live – and no matter what breed of dog you have, it is critical for a dog's physical and mental well-being that it is exercised adequately every day.

As long as you are able to meet the dog's physical and mental needs daily, the following breeds of dogs will generally settle into apartment life easier (than more active breeds) as they have lower exercise requirements. The list below is in alphabetical order, not the order of suitability.

- ▶ Australian Terrier
- ▶ Basset Hound
- ▶ Bichon Frise
- ▶ Boston Terriers
- ▶ Bulldog and French Bulldog
- ▶ Cavalier King Charles Spaniels
- ▶ Chihuahua
- ▶ Chinese Crested Dog
- ▶ Daschund (toy)
- ▶ Greyhound
- ▶ Italian Greyhounds
- ▶ Lowchen
- ▶ Pekingese
- ▶ Poodle (miniature)
- ▶ Pug
- ▶ Shih Tzu
- ▶ Whippet

*The above list should be seen as a general guide only. Many other dogs will happily live in apartments as long as their basic needs are met. The information about dog breeds used in this publication has been taken primarily from <http://www.dogbreedinfo.com/apartment.htm> and Gwen Bailey's book, 'Choosing the right dog', 2004. The information about dog breed characteristics in this publication offers generalisations about each breed and is no guarantee of particular behaviour for an individual dog. Consider reading 'Before you get a Puppy' by Dr Ian Dunbar. It is available free of charge at <http://www.siriuspup.com/beforebook.html>



KONG™ food dispensers.
A great way to keep your dog entertained while you are away.

More information about the breeds

AUSTRALIAN TERRIER

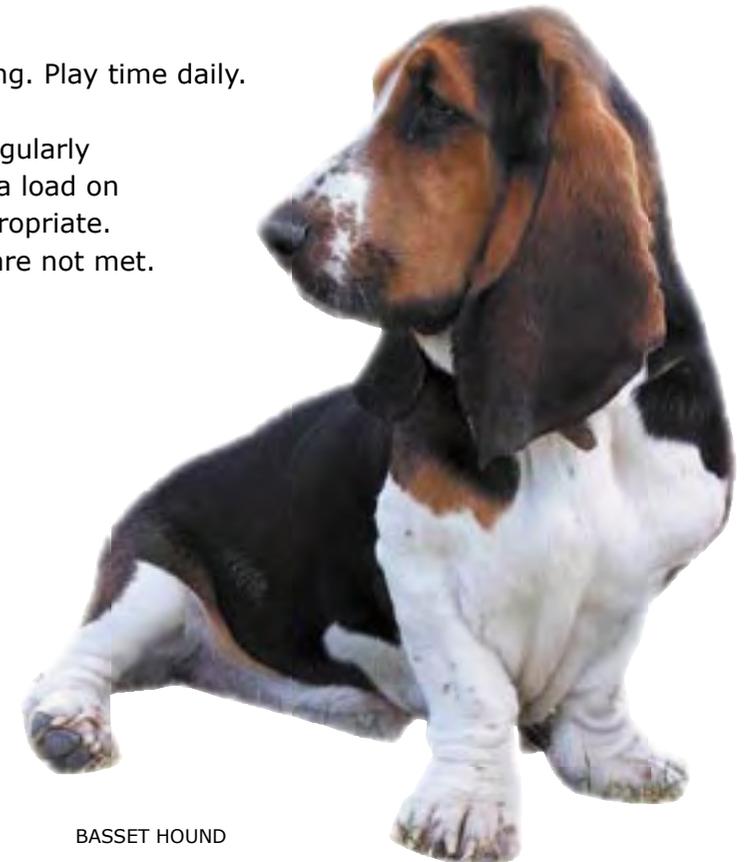
Height:	23–28 cm
Weight:	4–6 kg
Exercise:	Will require daily walks and is active indoors. The terrier breed has a tendency to chase.
Life span:	15+ years
Grooming:	Generally low to non-shedding. Will need brushing several times a week.
Health:	Robust. Trim the hair around the eyes regularly with blunt-nosed scissors.
Strangers:	Will alert bark at strangers.
Children:	Needs lots of early socialisation with children of all ages.

BASSET HOUND

Height:	28–38cm
Weight:	20–29kg
Exercise:	One long daily walk in the morning and a shorter walk in the evening. Play time daily.
Life span:	10–12 years
Grooming:	This breed is a constant shedder so will need to be brushed very regularly
Health:	Do not overfeed these dogs because extra weight places too great a load on the legs and spine. An apartment with lots of stairs would be inappropriate. This breed can become barkers if their mental and physical needs are not met.
Strangers:	Generally friendly.
Children:	Friendly.

BICHON FRISE

Height:	23–30 cm
Weight:	3–5 kg
Exercise:	Daily walk and play. Will need mental stimulation indoors
Life span:	15+ years
Grooming:	The Bichon sheds little to no hair and is good for allergy sufferers. The coat will need regular clipping.
Health:	Some are prone to watery eyes so trim around the eyes and ears with a blunt pair of scissors and clean the eyes extensively to prevent staining.
Strangers:	Wants to be friends.
Children:	Very Friendly.



BASSET HOUND

BOSTON TERRIERS

Height:	38–43 cm
Weight:	4–11 kg
Exercise:	Require daily walks and mental stimulation.
Life span:	15+ years
Grooming:	An average hair shedder, but the smooth, short-haired coat is easy to groom and should be done several times a week.
Health:	Being a short-nosed dog they may have breathing difficulties when stressed by exertion. They may also snore or drool.
Strangers:	Generally easy-going.
Children:	Fun.

BULLDOG

Height:	31–40 cm
Weight:	22–25 kg
Exercise:	A lot of human attention is required for the breed's happiness. If you are away from home a lot, this dog will suffer.
Life span:	~8 years
Grooming:	This breed is an average shedder. Skin folds need to be kept clean
Health:	They snore very loudly, and most have drool and slobber tendencies. They can have breathing problems; some have small windpipes as well. Also poor eyesight, very susceptible to heat stroke in warm weather or hot rooms and cars. Very cold sensitive. This breed is an indoor dog. Bulldogs do best in temperate climates as the breed can chill easily in cold weather and have trouble cooling off in very hot weather.
Strangers:	Can be a watchdog.
Children:	Known to be gentle.

FRENCH BULLDOG

Height:	30 cm
Weight:	9–13 kg
Exercise:	They need companionship and will not thrive without it.
Life span:	10–12 years
Grooming:	The French Bulldog is an average shedder but the short coat is very easy care.
Health:	They can overheat easily and this can lead to heat stroke. Some, but not all, may drool and slobber.
Strangers:	They get along fairly well with strangers and other animals.
Children:	This breed does best with older considerate children.



CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL

Height:	30-33 cm
Weight:	5-8 kg
Exercise:	They are moderately active indoors and a small yard will be sufficient. The Cavalier does not do well in very warm conditions.
Life span:	~9-14 years
Grooming:	This breed is an average shedder. The coat will form painful knots if not brushed regularly.
Health:	Check the eyes carefully for any signs of infection. The breed has multiple health issues, research this thoroughly before you commit to the breed.
Strangers:	Friendly if well socialised when young.
Children:	Friendly if well socialised when young.

CHIHUAHUA

Height:	15-23 cm
Weight:	1-3 kg
Exercise:	Because of his short nose, the Chihuahua tends to wheeze and snore. Walking on a harness rather than a flat collar will prevent any damage to the dog's throat by excessive pulling. The Chihuahua hates the cold and may shiver.
Life span:	~15+ years
Grooming:	This breed is an average shedder. The smooth, short-haired coat should be gently brushed occasionally or simply wiped over with a damp cloth. The long coat should be brushed daily with a soft bristle brush.
Health:	They can be a challenge to toilet train. Be sure to socialise your Chihuahua as a pup to avoid excessive aggressiveness with other dogs as well as being reserved with strangers.
Strangers:	Wary and can be snappy.
Children:	Wary and need early positive socialisation.



CAVALIER KING CHARLES
SPANIEL

CHINESE CRESTED DOG (HAIRLESS)

Height:	30 cm
Weight:	4–5 kg
Exercise:	They are not barkers. Chinese Crested Dogs like to climb and dig holes.
Life span:	~10-12 years
Grooming:	Chinese Crested are very clean, with no doggie odor and are not prone to fleas or ticks. Bathe the Hairless frequently and massage a little oil or cream into the skin to keep it supple. These dogs shed little to no hair and are great for allergy sufferers.
Health:	Exposed skin needs special care to prevent skin problems and irritations.
Strangers:	Can have a timid response to noise if not positively socialised when young.
Children:	Affectionate – dog's skin can easily be damaged.



DASCHUND

DASCHUND (TOY)

Height:	30 cm
Weight:	3.5 kg
Exercise:	This breed has an instinct to dig.
Life span:	~12–15yrs
Grooming:	Long-haired require daily combing and brushings; wire-haired need professional trimming twice a year, and smooth-haired require regular rubdown with a damp cloth. This breed is an average shedder.
Health:	Apartments with lots of stairs are unsuitable as the breed is prone to spinal disc problems. There are other health issues so research the breed if this dog appeals to you.
Strangers:	Known for their watchdog qualities and will bark at strangers.
Children:	They may become unpredictable with children and adults they do not know.

ITALIAN GREYHOUND

Height:	30-38 cm
Weight:	3-5 kg
Exercise:	Young Italian Greyhounds are very active. They can climb wire fencing and are very inquisitive - jumping from chair to table tops to nearby furniture. This breed is very sensitive to cold temperatures and should wear a sweater to go out in the cold weather. Italian Greyhounds may be a good jogging companion for short distances, but they do better as a walking companion.
Life span:	~12-15 years
Grooming:	The Italian Greyhound is one of the easiest dogs to groom. All that is needed to keep the fine, silky coat gleaming is a rubdown with a piece of toweling or chamois. The breed sheds very little hair.
Health:	The Italian Greyhound is hardier than it appears - but they do feel the cold. The adult dog is certainly not delicate but until they are about eighteen months old, their bones are quite fragile.
Strangers:	Reserved.
Children:	This is a pet for a quiet household.

ITALIAN GREYHOUND

GREYHOUND

Height:	68-76 cm
Weight:	28-32 kg
Exercise:	Indoors, these dogs are calm and sociable to a point where they can even be considered lazy. Most Greyhounds have a definite prey instinct. It is instinctive for these dogs to chase anything that moves quickly. They are extremely fast and some will kill cats and other domestic animals.
Life span:	10-12 years
Grooming:	This breed is an average shedder. The smooth, short-haired coat is very easy to groom.
Health:	May be prone to bloat. They are sensitive to drugs, including insecticides.
Strangers:	Reserved.
Children:	Fine if socialised early. Chasing games with children should be discouraged.



LOWCHEN

Height:	25–33 cm
Weight:	4–8 kg
Exercise:	They are active indoors and will need 1–2 walks each day. If necessary it will defend its house with intense barking. They are not hyperactive, but some may bark or dig a lot.
Life span:	12–14 years
Grooming:	The coat should be combed and brushed regularly to prevent tangles from forming. The Lowchen sheds little to no hair. This breed is good for allergy sufferers.
Health:	Generally healthy, some may have issues with their knees.
Strangers:	May 'alert' bark as strangers approach. Should be friendly as long as they have been well socialised as young dogs.
Children:	Generally good.

PEKINGESE

Height:	30–45 cm
Weight:	3–5 kg
Exercise:	They are relatively inactive indoors but still require at least one walk per day.
Life span:	10–15 years
Grooming:	High maintenance grooming requirements. Daily combing and brushing of the very long, double coat is essential. Females shed the undercoat when in season. Clean the face and eyes daily.
Health:	They have several health issues – research the breed if this breed is of interest to you.
Strangers:	This breed makes a good watchdog. The Pekingese may be difficult to housebreak.
Children:	They can become wary of strangers, and may become untrustworthy with children and even adults.

POODLE (MINIATURE)

Height:	28–38 cm
Weight:	7–8 kg
Exercise:	When they reach maturity, they will settle when indoors. They love to play outdoors and are a highly intelligent breed, so they do like lots of thoughtful activities to stimulate them mentally.
Life span:	12–15 years

POODLE



Grooming: Poodles shed little to no hair and are good for allergy sufferers but require extensive grooming. They must be clipped regularly and the ears should be checked regularly for mites.

Health: Poodles have several health issues – research the breed further if this breed appeals to you. Some lines of the breed tend to bark a lot without rules to follow and limits to what they are allowed to do.

Strangers: They tend to be quite reserved with strangers and should be socialised as a puppy.

Children: Some love to play, others are very nervous.

PUG

Height: 25–36 cm

Weight: 6–9 kg

Exercise: They enjoy energetic games and will keep in better health if given regular exercise. But be careful not to overdo it, especially if you see them start to wheeze.

Life span: 12–14 years

Grooming: The creases on the face must be cleaned regularly. This breed is a seasonally heavy shedder.

Health: Pugs catch colds easily and are stressed by hot and cold weather. They are prone to allergies and the short muzzle contributes to chronic breathing problems.

Strangers: Friendly and confident.

Children: Playful and friendly.

SHIH TZU

Height: 28 cm

Weight: 4–7 kg

Exercise: They are fairly active indoors and will do okay without a yard.

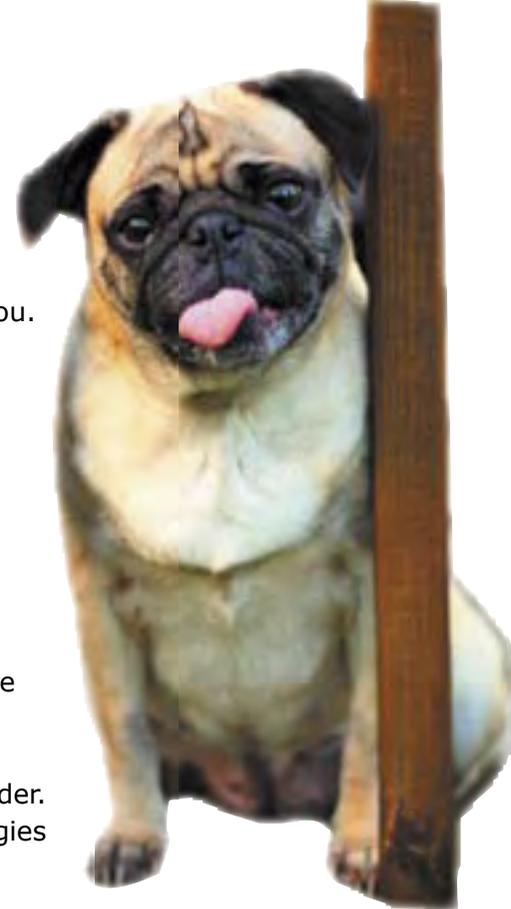
Life span: 15+ years

Grooming: This breed sheds little to no hair and are good for allergy sufferers if their coats are kept very well groomed.

Health: Shih Tzu's are sensitive to the heat. They tend to wheeze and snore. Some bloodlines are prone to ear, eye and respiratory problems.

Strangers: Okay if socialised early.

Children: If not socialised early they can become snappy.



PUG

WHIPPET

Height:	44–56 cm
Weight:	11–21 kg
Exercise:	The Whippet should have regular opportunities to run free on open ground (in a safe area) as well as a brisk daily walk on a leash. They are a sighthound and will chase and kill small animals so a fenced yard is essential.
Life span:	12–15 years
Grooming:	This breed is an average shedder. The Whippet's smooth, fine, short-haired coat is easy to groom.
Health:	Whippets are sensitive to the cold and are prone to stomach upset and skin problems.
Strangers:	Reserved.
Children:	They are good with children of all ages as long as the children do not roughhouse or tease the dog.



PLEASE NOTE: RSPCA ACT has taken a great deal of care compiling this guide. Our focus will always remain the animal in question and our overarching desire is the animal's welfare. Whereas this guide sets out circumstances where we believe a dog can live in an apartment successfully it must be remembered that every dog is different. This guide is not designed to be prescriptive or exhaustive, it is designed to simply provide some high level thoughts, ideas and strategies based on our experience. We strongly recommend that this guide be used in conjunction with advice from your veterinarian, dog behaviourist and land lord. Only you truly know your living circumstances and the personality of your dog. RSPCA ACT can provide further advice, training and assistance on a fee for service basis should you be unsure or wish to learn more.

RSPCA ACT takes no responsibility for damage caused by a dog to you, visitors, or your home as a result of action taken relating to information provided in this guide.

Keeping your dog entertained

Some pets may need more entertainment (environmental enrichment) than others due to their size, breed and the amount of time they are left at home alone each day. What you choose to do needs to suit your lifestyle as well as your dog. You don't need to spend lots of money on toys – make them instead.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION

1. Scatter dry food for your dog to 'find' while you are away.
2. Place food in treat dispensing toys such as a Kong™ or food ball. Solving how to get the food out mentally fatigues the dog.
3. Use food to train your pet.
4. Spread your pet's meals across the day (2 or 3 times daily) - don't use a food bowl as the food disappears without any effort by the dog. Searching for food gives the dog a job to do and mentally tires your dog.
5. Try freezing food in ice cream containers, milk containers, or in a Kong™. The more tiring the effort of getting the food is, the more likely the dog is to settle and sleep after it has eaten.

TOYS

Have a range of toys and rotate them daily. This prevents the dog from becoming bored with all the toys. You need to observe your own dog interacting with its toys to make sure it is safe. Some dogs will devour everything, so assess your own dog to know what you can safely leave it with.

The recycle bin is a great source of toys. Plastic milk bottles with the lids and labels removed and a few bits of dry food left inside can provide lots of fun for a dog.

Leave the best toys (like squeaky toys and tennis balls) for interaction between you and the dog.

See www.petwiz.com.au for more ideas or Google search 'environmental enrichment for dogs'.

EXERCISE (physical and mental)

Take your dog for a walk in the morning, let the dog stop and sniff as this burns up mental energy. Two walks a day is a wonderful routine to get into.

Play games like fetch, tug and 'find the hidden object'.

TRAINING

Joining some group training classes. It may be basic obedience and then joining an agility, tracking, herding, flyball or canine freestyle class. Research what groups are around your area. Ensure you join a group which only use the positive methods of rewards-based training. RSPCA ACT runs seven week 'Life Skills' classes for puppies, adolescent and adult dogs.

FRIENDS and PLAY

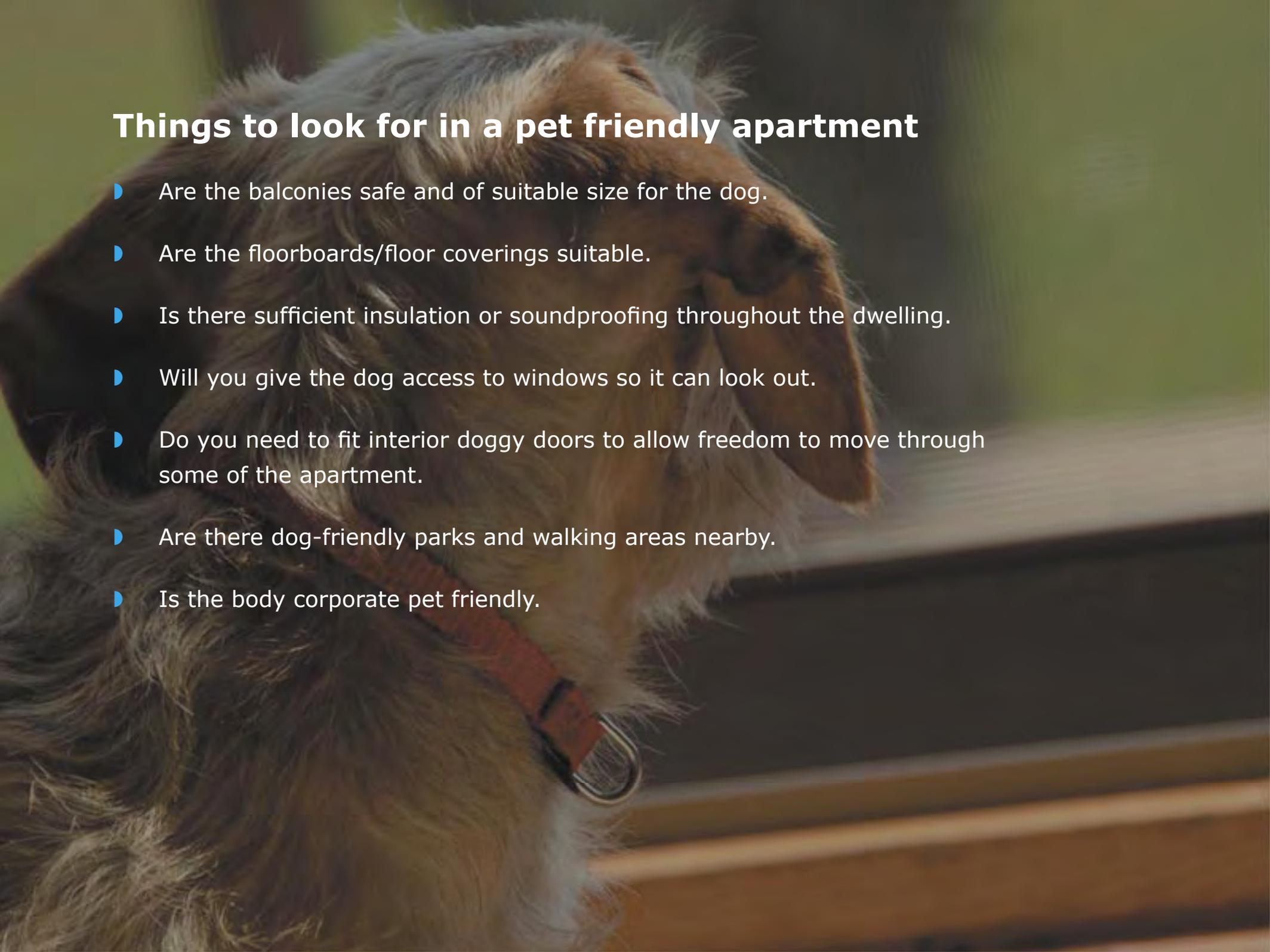
Different breeds of dogs play different games. Pick a dog-friend for your dog that plays the same style of games.

For example: A dog bred to herd like a border collie or kelpie usually likes chasing games best while the 'bull breeds', such as the staffordshire bull terrier like to play charging and rough contact games. Generally then if you put a bull terrier with a collie they will not play so well together as the play styles are too different.

Keep play groups small (ideally two dogs only) as predatory drift can quickly mean a game turns from fun into something quite serious.

Leash free dog areas are available to exercise your dog but your dog must be under your control at ALL TIMES. That means if your dog is off lead and you need to call it, the dog should come to you – everytime.

If you do not have that degree of control then your dog is not yet ready to be off lead in these areas.



Things to look for in a pet friendly apartment

- ▶ Are the balconies safe and of suitable size for the dog.
- ▶ Are the floorboards/floor coverings suitable.
- ▶ Is there sufficient insulation or soundproofing throughout the dwelling.
- ▶ Will you give the dog access to windows so it can look out.
- ▶ Do you need to fit interior doggy doors to allow freedom to move through some of the apartment.
- ▶ Are there dog-friendly parks and walking areas nearby.
- ▶ Is the body corporate pet friendly.

Prior to getting a dog

- ▶ Do you travel often? If so do, who will care for the dog when you are away?
- ▶ Can you interact with the dog at least three times a day?
- ▶ Will it matter if the dog sheds a lot of hair?
- ▶ Are you prepared for unexpected expenses if the dog gets sick?
- ▶ Can you afford ordinary costs for such necessities as worming, vaccinations and spay/neutering?
- ▶ Where will your dog take your dog for it's daily exercise and toilet breaks?
- ▶ Can you 'house train' the dog? (this includes toilet training and chew training)
- ▶ Can you teach the dog basic commands? (sit, wait, walk on lead, come when called)
- ▶ Can you spend the time socialising the dog so that is friendly with people and other animals?
- ▶ Do you have other pets already?
- ▶ Where will the dog be predominantly – indoors or out?

Wherever you choose to live, participating in 'Life Skills' pet dog training with the RSPCA ACT is highly recommended.





References

Alderton D. 1993, 'Dogs' Dorling Kindersley Handbooks

Bailey G. 2004, 'Choosing the right dog'

Bailey G. 2002, 'Puppy handbook'

Bolton C. 2006 'RSPCA Turning your pet into your pal with Life Skills pet dog training'

Dunbar Dr. I. 2001, 'BEFORE you get your Puppy'

Gardner J. 2002 'Pedigree Points'

McGreevy P. 1999, 'The little guides Dogs'

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1993 (NSW)
SECTION 124 ORDER 18(3) -
The keeping of dogs

Websites

www.canismajor.com/dog/apart.html

www.petmedsonline.org

www.dogbreedinfo.com/apartment.htm

www.petwiz.com.au/joomla/media/EE.pdf

www.siriuspup.com/beforebook.html

RSPCA ACT

12 Kirkpatrick Street

PO BOX 3082

WESTON ACT 2611

1300 4 777 22

www.rspca-act.org.au

rspca@rspca-act.org.au