

Perhaps the most common misunderstanding about dogs is that they're all pretty much the same animal in different natural fur suits. In fact the various breeds are very different from each other in a lot more ways than appearance. The following notes about whippets may help you decide if the breed is right for you and/or get off to a good start with your new dog or puppy. As with any breed, there are negatives as well as positives and it's important to go in with your eyes open when you acquire any dog.

Though the whippet is a beautiful, elegant breed, choosing a dog for looks only is about as successful as choosing a husband or wife based entirely on appearance. The chances of a working relationship coming out of a pairing like that are fairly low.

The most important consideration in choosing a dog is its heritage. What was it bred to do? True, not many dogs are used for their original functions any more, but the instincts that were bred into them for generations are mostly still there. The whippet was developed to course and kill small game. Prey drive -- the desire to chase a fast moving object, catch it, and grab it -- is still alive and strong in the breed. Whippets are excellent pets for many people, but prey drive is something the whippet owner should never forget or underestimate.

Not everyone who owns whippets will agree with all of the following article. But it's a summary of what we have personally observed about whippets as pets over the years, and what we think you might expect. All whippets are individuals, and there are exceptions to every rule...but don't get a whippet and expect her to act like the Lab or collie you had as a kid. She won't!

We suggest you read all of this page before deciding on whippets as your breed, but you can get to the individual topics by clicking on them below.

## **Personality**

These are playful but gentle dogs. Rough handling, even in play, is an absolute no-no and you'll get the best training results with treats and praise. They respond very poorly to force-training.

Sighthounds are traditionally considered rather aloof dogs, but whippets are an exception to that. This is one of the most affectionate of breeds; most of them love all the petting and belly rubs you'll give, and many are real snugglers. We do meet the occasional reserved whippet, but in our experience, over-exuberance is much more common. The "Cool Joe" whippets are very loving, too, just not quite as physical.

Whippets are sometimes referred to as "Velcro dogs." You might have more company than you want in the bathroom, and if you go out to the mailbox, you may be greeted just as enthusiastically upon your return as you would be after a two-week absence. This is more togetherness than some people like, and if you really prefer an independent dog, a Basenji might be a better choice.

You'll be wise to keep your whippet close to you anyway, especially at first. Whippets are mischievous! Clever and cute (but annoying) behavior such as leaping to the kitchen counter and scouting for food or tearing up a sofa cushion to make it softer is common, especially in puppies and young adults. (See [Would an Adult Whippet be a Better Choice?](#)) Whippets do mellow out around two or three years old, but as puppies, they can really be monsters. This is not a pup you want to leave loose in the living room while you run to the store!

Whippets will want to share your bed as well as the couch. In fact, if you are really fussy about dogs on your furniture, you might want to reconsider choosing a whippet. A whippet in good condition has very little "natural" padding and hard surfaces are distinctly uncomfortable. You'll seldom see one willingly lying on a bare floor. Whippets love their comfort; the softest chair or pillow your boy can find probably will become his favorite. If you use a crate, provide a soft mat. Like cats, many of them seem to enjoy perching in higher places...the back of the couch, the top of the sideboard, even the dining room table. Obviously, some training is required!

Crate training is a good idea for your puppy...you have to take a shower sometime and the little scamp can get into all manner of things while you're occupied. However, the desire to be around people also makes some whippets hard to crate successfully; some howl and moan in their crates even if properly crate-trained as puppies.

Separation anxiety is discussed as a breed problem, but as in many others, it is often

over-diagnosed. Whippets who are unhappy with their living arrangements tend to let you know about it. We've heard many a story about a whippet with "severe separation anxiety" who is fine when placed in a home where he receives more attention.

This breed does seem to do better in a two- or multi-dog household. Hounds are pack animals, even more so than other types of dogs, and most whippets like doggy company as well as human company. This is very important, especially if the humans are away during the day. We always tell our puppy buyers that they will be back for another one. Whippets are the original "potato chip" dog. No one can have just one!